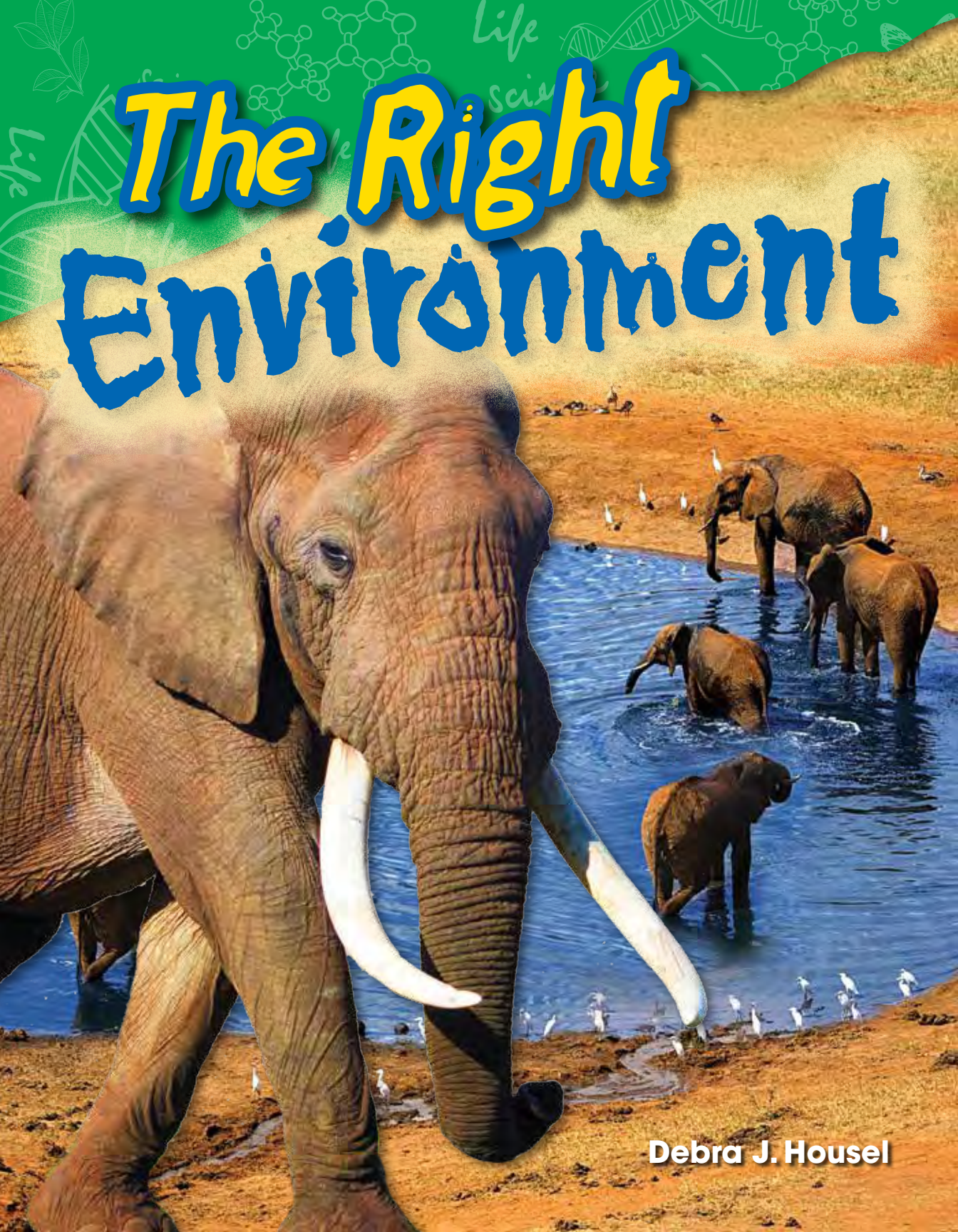
The Right Environment



Debra J. Housel

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Home Sweet Home

It's a warm summer day. You go inside because you feel hot and sweaty. The air conditioning is on. It feels good! It keeps your house just the right temperature. Air conditioners and furnaces make it possible for humans to live almost anywhere. In fact, many of us spend much of our time inside.

But wild animals and plants live outside. These **organisms** must live in the right habitat, or home, to survive. Each habitat must have the right kind of weather, food, and land for those who live in it. Some plants and animals do better in wet places. Others do better in dry places. Some organisms prefer to live in places with a lot of insects. Others do best in places with few insects. There are many different types of habitats. The right **environment** allows plants and animals to do more than survive. It allows them to thrive.



As ostriches breathe in, moisture in their beaks evaporates, cooling them down.

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Tree Frog

Tree frogs thrive in a wet environment, and the rainforest doesn't start with the word *rain* for no reason. It's the perfect home for this tree hopper.

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Ecosystems

The plants and animals in habitats that are in the same area make up an **ecosystem**. Water, soil, sunlight, and other nonliving things are included in an ecosystem, too. Each ecosystem has different things in it. But they're all filled with life forms that rely on one another to survive.

Think of a meadow. Clover grows in a meadow. A rabbit eats the clover. An owl eats the rabbit. Later, the owl dies. Its body falls to the ground. Insects, worms, and other **decomposers** break it down. Soon, its body is gone. Some of the **nutrients** from the owl go back into the dirt for new clover to use. Worms also absorb some of the nutrients. Later, moles will eat the worms.

Every plant or animal has a niche, or role, to play in an ecosystem. Some living things may compete with one another for things that they need. Others may help one another survive.



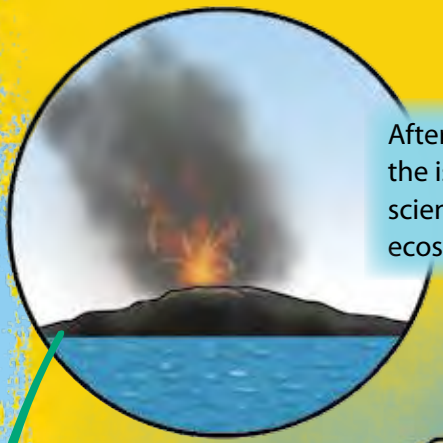
Nesting Places

Marsh bulrush and cattails are plants that live in wetland ecosystems. They provide a habitat for duck and geese within the ecosystem.

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Starting from Scratch

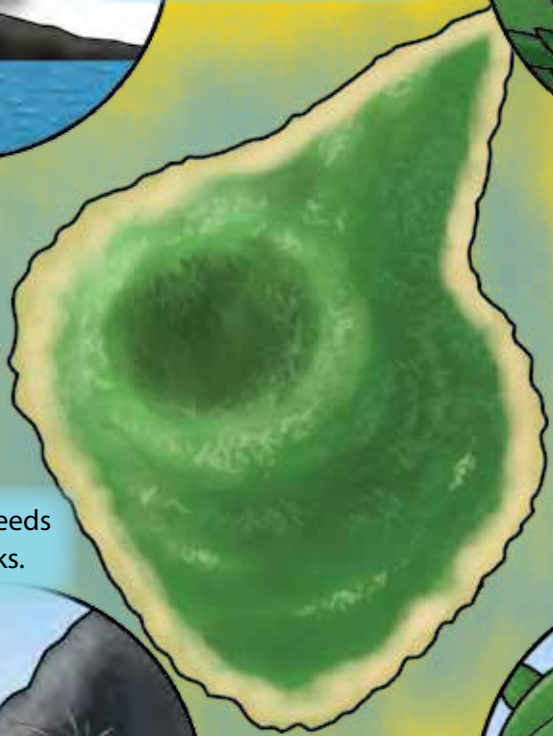
Natural disasters, such as floods, fires, and volcanic eruptions, can change ecosystems in dramatic ways.



After a volcano created the island of Surtsey, scientists watched its ecosystem form.



Then, birds came to eat the bugs.



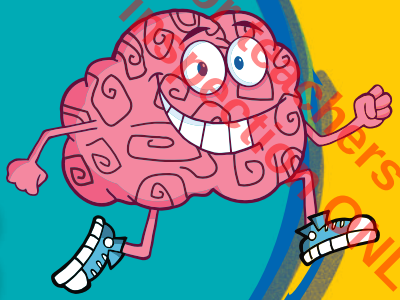
First, winds blew seeds onto the black rocks.



When these seeds sprouted, bugs came to eat the plants.



Think Like a Scientist



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Do lima beans prefer a sunny or shady habitat? Experiment and find out!

What to Get

- 1 two-liter clear bottle
- 1 two-liter green bottle
- 2 one-gallon sandwich bags
- 6 lima bean seeds
- pebbles
- potting soil
- water

