During the chilly month of January, the friends in the Green Room took a trip south to the balmy Tropical Rainforests! We studied the ecology of the rainforest and the children delighted in learning about the many plants, animals, and insects that call the rainforest home! We also learned many interesting facts. For example, did you know that rainforests cover only about 2 percent of the Earth’s total surface, but nearly 50 percent of the world’s plants and animals live there? Our unit was divided into four weeks, and each week we took a deep dive into a different rainforest layer. We started at the Forest Floor and worked our way up to the understory, then to the canopy, and finally to the tops of the trees in the emergent layer!

Tropical Rainforest

**Our Favorite Theme Books**

- Circle time is a great time to hear stories that help friends learn more about our theme. This month our favorite books were:
  - Secrets of the Rainforest: A Shine the Light Book by Carron Brown and Alissa Nassner
  - Rainforest Animals by Paul Hess
  - We’re Roaming in the Rainforest by Laurie Krebs and Anne Wilson
  - A Day and Night in the Rainforest by Caroline Arnold

**Mango Monkey Says…**

Our wise puppet friend visited the friends this month to talk about ways we can be a kind friend by sharing and taking turns. Mango Monkey loved playing with a certain special ball in his class and he did not want anyone else to use it. After reading the book *Share and Take Turns* by Cheri J. Meiners, the friends brainstormed some strategies for Mango. The ideas they came up with included:

- Letting your friends know you will share the toy as soon as you are done with it.
- Offering to play with the toy together
- Helping your friend find a similar toy
The Forest Floor

We began our theme by looking closely at the lowest layer of the rainforest, the forest floor! We learned that the forest floor is quite dark and damp due to the limited sunlight that is able to penetrate below the dense forest leaves. The children enjoyed learning about the creatures and plants that inhabit the forest floor through circle time stories, games, and in centers. We learned what it means to be camouflaged and created our own camouflaged beetles! We also had the chance to interact with our classroom worms and talked about the vital role worms play in the ecosystem both here and in the rainforest.

The Understory

Next, we travelled up to the second layer of the rainforest, the understory! This is the warm, green, leafy layer underneath the canopy. Some of the animals that call this layer home include bats, snakes, frogs, butterflies, and other insects. Some of our experiences included creating a bat cave in the block area, using our imaginations in the water table rainforest, and painting our own symmetrical butterflies! We also had fun learning some rainforest yoga poses such as tree frog pose, piranha pose, and anaconda pose! Finally, we learned about some of the resources that come from rainforests, including bananas and chocolate. The children enjoyed making and eating “Ants on a Rainforest Log” (bananas with sun butter and chocolate chips)!
Climbing, climbing, climbing! This week we climbed up to the canopy layer of the rainforest. This layer is abundant with fruits and nuts and as a result is also the layer where the most wildlife can be found! Our dramatic play center was transformed into a tropical fruit stand and we sorted fruit based on many different attributes, including size, shape, and whether or not it grows on a vine! The children also learned about and practiced making ABC and AABB patterns using rainforest wildlife stamps. We expressed our creative side when we worked together to paint a giant orangutan and to create a 3D rainforest tree! However, the highlight of the week had to be carefully following a recipe to make our very own green “rainforest” slime for the sensory table!

This week, we climbed all the way up to the very tops of the trees! This layer of the rainforest is known as the emergent layer. Here, sunlight and wind are abundant as are many feathered creatures! The friends each had the chance to create their very own wearable bird wings and delighted in “flying” around the classroom. The children also enjoyed taking all of their new-found rainforest knowledge and using it to write and illustrate fictional rainforest stories. We ended our week and our rainforest study with a delicious tropical fruit taste test. As we taste tested mangoes, papayas, pineapple, and dates, we created a class graph showing everyone’s favorite tropical fruit.
Make Shop Experiences

This month in the Make Shop, we examined the idea of “How Things Work”. We started by using tools to take apart common household electronics and appliances to discover what was inside and what might make each item work. After this, we investigated different types of simple machines, such as a pulley, a ramp, and a wheel and axle. Finally, we explored how circuits make electricity flow!

Music Experiences with Mrs. Hraber

Mrs. Hraber integrated music into our Rainforest theme this month. Pete the Metronome returned dressed as a tree frog! The friends learned a song all about the layers of the rainforest sung to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It!” The children also had the opportunity to practice keeping the beat by playing different sized drums and frog shaped Guios, a Latin American percussion instrument.

Center Spotlight: The Sensory Table

New to our classroom this semester is our Sensory Table! Sensory play has countless benefits for young children, including improving motor skills, language, problem solving, and cognitive development. This month, the sensory table has been filled with FunFetti (small plastic pebbles), cocoa nibs (the smell was glorious!), and our own classmade slime! The children have been thoroughly enjoying scooping, dumping, mixing, and creating in this new area. Exposing children to a wide variety of sensory play experiences allows them the opportunity for open-ended inquiry and investigation as well as the chance to stretch their imagination and creativity. The hands-on and exploratory nature of sensory play is also very inviting for young children, and our Green Room friends have been naturally drawn to the sensory table!
Birthday Celebrations

We have had several friends celebrate their birthdays at school!

Happy Birthday to Ezra, Will, Betty Lou, Wally, and Dylan!

If your child has an upcoming birthday and you would like to celebrate it with them at school, please reach out to Mrs. Bird. We would love to have you!
Our Month in Photos