JAGUAR

*Panthera onca*

**DIET:** Carnivore. Large and medium-sized animals including tapirs, deer, peccaries, and capybaras. However, will prey on smaller animals such as agoutis, armadillos, iguanas, turtles, caimans, birds, and fish.

**PREDATORS:** None

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Solitary

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OCELOT

*Leopardus pardalis*

**DIET:** Carnivore. Medium-sized and small animals, including agoutis, opossums, rabbits, armadillos, spiny rats, lizards, and birds.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars, pumas, harpy eagles

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Solitary or pairs

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TAYRA

*Eira barbara*

**DIET:** Omnivore. Medium-sized and small animals, including agoutis, spiny rats, rabbits, lizards, and invertebrates. Also eats bird eggs and fruit.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars, pumas, harpy eagles

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Solitary or pairs

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COATI

*Nasua narica*

**DIET:** Omnivore. Small animals, include rodents, lizards, and insects and other invertebrates. Also eats fruit when available.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars, pumas, harpy eagles

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Groups of females and their offspring, usually including 10 to 20 individuals. Males are solitary except during the breeding season, when they join groups of females.
**TAPIR**

*Tapirus bairdii*

**DIET:** Herbivore (browser). Feeds on leaves of shrubs and small trees. Also eats flowers and fallen fruit.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Solitary

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**WHITE-TAILED DEER**

*Odocoileus virginianus*

**DIET:** Herbivore (browser). Feeds on leaves and twigs of shrubs and small trees. Also eats fallen fruit and seeds.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars, pumas

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Solitary or small groups

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**COLLARED PECCARY**

*Pecari tajacu*

**DIET:** Omnivore. Feeds on fruits, seeds, roots, and other vegetable matter, as well as some invertebrates.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars, pumas

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Small herds of up to 15 individuals

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**AGOUTI**

*Dasyprocta punctata*

**DIET:** Herbivore. Feeds on seeds and fruits. May eat other vegetable matter and fungi when fruits are in short supply.

**PREDATORS:** Most large and medium-sized carnivores, including jaguars, pumas, ocelots, tayra, birds of prey, and others

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Pairs
**COMMON OPOSSUM**

_Didelphis marsupialis_

**DIET:** Omnivore. Eats small vertebrates, invertebrates, carrion, fruit, nectar, leaves, and bird eggs.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars, pumas, ocelots, tayra, birds of prey, and other medium-sized carnivores

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Solitary

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**WHITE-FACED CAPUCHIN**

_Cebus capucinus_

**DIET:** Omnivore. Eats fruit, flowers, insects and other invertebrates, small vertebrates, and bird eggs.

**PREDATORS:** Ocelots, tayra, birds of prey, and other medium-sized carnivores

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Groups of 5 to 30 individuals

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**NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO**

_Dasypus novemcinctus_

**DIET:** Omnivore. Eats insects and other invertebrates, small vertebrates, carrion, and fruit.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars, pumas, ocelots, tayra, birds of prey, and other medium-sized carnivores

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Solitary

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**SPINY RATS (two species)**

_Proechimys semispinosus and Hoplomys gymnurus_

**DIET:** Omnivore. Eat mostly fruits, seeds, and other vegetation, but also consume insects and fungi.

**PREDATORS:** Ocelots, tayra, birds of prey, and other medium-sized carnivores

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Solitary
**GREAT CURASSOW**

3–5 kg

_Crax rubra_

**DIET:** Omnivore. Eats fallen fruits, seeds, and other vegetation, as well as insects and other invertebrates.

**PREDATORS:** Jaguars, pumas, ocelots, tayra, birds of prey, and other medium-sized carnivores

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Monogamous pairs or small groups

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**INSECTS**

Varies; up to 100 g

**DIET:** Varies widely; carnivore, herbivore, or omnivore. Eat plants, fungi, other insects or invertebrates, carrion, dung, and blood of vertebrates.

**PREDATORS:** Birds, medium-sized and small mammals, reptiles, and insects, spiders, and other invertebrates

**SOCIAL GROUPS:** Varies greatly from solitary to large social colonies

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**CANOPY TREES**

The tallest trees of the tropical forest form the canopy, containing the highest layer of leaves. Because this layer receives the most sunlight, most photosynthesis takes place here and most leaves, flowers, and fruit are produced here. Many forest animals including monkeys and sloths live and find their food here. Animals of the forest floor such as agoutis, peccaries, and tapirs depend on fruit that falls from the canopy. Fallen leaves create leaf litter that hosts many insects and small animals that provide food to other animals.

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**MEDIUM-SIZED TREES**

This forest layer includes tree species that don’t grow tall enough to reach the canopy and younger individuals of canopy species that have not yet attained their full height. Although this layer receives less light than the canopy above, it is still better lit than lower levels of the forest and produces leaves, flowers, and fruit as food for tree-climbing animals. As with canopy trees, fruit that falls from this layer provides food for ground-dwelling animals.
SMALL TREES AND SHRUBS

This layer contains trees and shrubs that don’t grow very tall plus saplings of taller tree species. Light levels are low, so plants grow slowly and don’t produce as much fruit or leaves as those in the layers above. However, browsers such as deer and tapirs can reach leaves in this layer, and ground-dwelling animals can pluck fruit before it falls.

UNDERSTORY PLANTS

This layer consists of very small woody plants, herbs, and seedlings of larger trees. Little sunlight reaches this layer due to the shade from the upper layers of the forest, so productivity of leaves and fruit is low. Small ground-loving animals such as agoutis and pacas may depend largely on fruit and seeds that fall from higher layers. However, omnivores like coatis and peccaries find insects and other invertebrates on the understory plants and leaf litter that covers the forest floor.

SEASONAL CYCLES

The annual cycle of dry and wet seasons affects the availability of food for animals in Darién. During the dry season from December to April, many trees lose their leaves. Nutritious fresh growth appears at the beginning of the wet season, providing food for herbivores including insects. Fruit abundance is also cyclical, with the lowest abundance occurring in the late rainy season in October and November, a time of shortage for fruit-eating animals.

LOGGING

Tropical forests often contain a very large diversity of tree species that differ greatly in wood quality. Because of this, logging is often done selectively, with only the largest or most valuable trees being harvested. However, removal of these trees can damage the ones that remain. Selective logging can reduce the habitat quality for many animals, although many species may still use such forests and some species prefer disturbed areas.
SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE

Local farmers clear forest to plant small plots for crops such as maize, rice, beans, cassava, and plantains. Traditionally, such plots are only cultivated for a few years before being allowed to revert to second-growth forest, allowing soil fertility to recover. However, increasing human populations result in more forest being cleared and farm plots being used longer before being allowed to recover. This results in habitat loss for forest animals, although a few species may use agricultural land at the edge of forest. When animals raid farm plots for food, farmers may kill them to protect their crops.

CATTLE RANCHING

In recent years, Darién has been colonized by increasing numbers of migrants from Panama’s central provinces who traditionally engage in cattle ranching. Colonists often buy or secure rights to land previously cleared for subsistence agriculture. Cattle ranchers frequently remove most remaining trees on the land, and compaction of soil by the cattle hooves makes it difficult for forest to regenerate even if the ranch is abandoned. Pasture land has the lowest biodiversity of any land use in the region.

HUNTING

Local residents often hunt preferred game species such as tapir, deer, peccaries, and curassows for food in areas near villages or farms. Predators such as jaguars and pumas may be killed if they attack livestock, if they are perceived as a threat, or for their skins or teeth.

ROADS

Roads are one of the principal drivers of deforestation and other kinds of disturbance in tropical forest areas. For many years, Darién was nearly roadless, but in recent years new roads and improvements to existing roads have brought in new colonists, increasing population pressure. Roads make it easier to get timber and crops to market, thus encouraging deforestation. They also fragment forests, isolating animal populations by restricting their movements.