

The Atlantic Coastal Plain

Name _____

Wide, winding rivers meander lazily through sandy soils. Seabirds call overhead and frogs croak from within thick and swampy patches of grass. At this intersection of land and water on the Eastern coast of the United States lies the Atlantic Coastal Plain region.

The Formation of the Atlantic Coastal Plain

This area, which stretches more than 2,200 miles from Massachusetts to Florida, was formed by powerful forces of oceans and rivers. To the west, the rivers of the Appalachian Mountains have flowed into the Atlantic Coastal Plain region for millions of years. In the mountains, the rivers race through steep drops and tight curves. Soil is stripped from the riverbanks and flows in rapid currents until it reaches the flatter and slower waters of the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Here, the calmer currents are too weak to carry the soil, so it is deposited at river edges onto the Plain. From the east, the sea level of the Atlantic Ocean rose and fell for millions of years. With each rise and fall, the ocean left flat and sandy layers of soil on the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Even today, the ocean continues to shape this region as sandy beaches and islands are gently pushed and shifted by ocean movements.

Features of the Atlantic Coastal Plain

Wetlands and bays are common features of the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Bays are coastal bodies of water that are partially surrounded by land. Most of the bays of the Atlantic Coastal Plain occur in the northern part of the region. The southern part of the region has many types of wetlands, including marshes, swamps, and bogs. Forests are sprinkled across the entire length of the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Cypress and cedar trees grow in swampy areas while pine trees are more common in dry areas.

Diversity

The diversity of habitats in the Atlantic Coastal Plain supports a wide variety of plants and animals. Swamps in The Croatoan National Forest in North Carolina contain more carnivorous plants than any other national forest in the country. In Florida, manatees use rivers, bays, and other coastal waters as their home. Many species of the Atlantic Coastal are endemic, meaning that they live nowhere else in the world. The Florida panther and the Pine Barrens frog in New Jersey are both endemic species. There are also many rare plants, especially wetland and beach plants, that live only in this region.

Challenges

The Atlantic Coastal Plain is a region of unique habitats formed slowly through millions of years of ocean changes and river forces. In the present day, however, the large human population of the region causes more rapid changes to its features. People need farmland and homes, but these changes often require draining the water from swamps and marshes. The balance that the region's people find between human development and the natural wonders of this area will shape the future of the Atlantic Coastal Plain.

1. **According to the reading, why does the Atlantic Coastal Plain have so many plant and animal species?**
 - a.) Weather conditions in the Atlantic Coastal Plain create ideal habitats
 - b.) There are many different habitats types for plants and animals to live in
 - c.) The region is very large
 - d.) The region has many areas that are untouched by humans

2. **Which of the following was not mentioned as a force that shapes the Atlantic Coastal Plain Region?**
 - a.) Human development
 - b.) Rivers
 - c.) Sea level change
 - d.) Wind

3. **Which of the following does NOT happen as soil is carried by river currents from the Appalachian Mountains to the Atlantic Coastal Plain?**
 - a.) Soil from mountain riverbanks is washed into the river current
 - b.) Rocks block the river currents as they reach the Atlantic Coastal Plain
 - c.) The river currents slow down
 - d.) Soil is deposited at the edges of the rivers.

4. **According to the reading, which of the following are endemic to the Atlantic Coastal Plain?**
- a.) Carnivorous plants
 - b.) Pine Barrens frogs
 - c.) Cypress trees
 - d.) Manatees
5. **According to the last paragraph, how can human development harm wetlands such as swamps and marshes?**
- a.) People drain the water from wetlands so that they can build on them
 - b.) People scare away the animals in wetlands
 - c.) People bring harmful chemicals into the wetlands.
 - d.) People use the water from wetlands for drinking.
6. **What would be the most appropriate heading for the final paragraph?**
- a.) “Endemic Species at Risk”
 - b.) “Farmland Destroys Wetland Habitats”
 - c.) “Human Development and the Atlantic Coastal Plain”
 - d.) “Humans Move to the Atlantic Coastal Plain”

Answers:

1. B

2. D

3. B

4. B

5. A

6. C