

The many effects of flooding

By National Geographic Society, adapted by Newsela staff on 05.07.20

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Image 1. A residential area flooded by the Ohio River during the flood of 1997 in Utica, Indiana. Floods can be destructive to humans and the environment; however, they are also essential to many ecosystems. Photo: Adam Jones/Science Source tk

Rivers are very important. Humans rely on rivers for food and water. But rivers can destroy things, too. Rivers can flood, or rise over their banks. The water can run into the nearby land.



Many times, floods can be deadly. They can kill humans and wildlife. But floods are not always bad. Some ecosystems need floods every once in a while.

Floods Can Cause Harm

Flooding can be bad for wildlife. The water can drown animals. They can destroy habitats, too. For example, a flood in India in 2012 killed many one-horned rhinos.

Flood waters can pick up dirt from riverbanks. This makes the water dirty. Too much dirt will clog rivers and streams. This keeps the river from flowing.

Floods can carry pollution. This can include pieces of trash. Sometimes, flood waters can carry pollution to the sea. This can harm marine life.

In addition, flood waters can carry disease. Some deadly diseases live in water. These include hepatitis A and cholera.

Some Floods Are Helpful

Not everything about floods is bad. Sometimes, floods are helpful. They bring new life to ecosystems.

Flood waters carry nutrients to the nearby land. Over time, the water dries up. It leaves behind particles of dirt and mud. These particles are called sediment. Sometimes, sediment can be good. It can improve the dirt. This helps plants grow.

Floods are important to some animals. Some animals see floods as a sign that it is time to mate. For other animals, floods are a sign that it is time to migrate. To migrate means move from one habitat to another.

Helping Fish, Boosting Water Supplies

Small floods can be good for fish. Floods leave sediment on river beds. Baby fish can grow in it. The flood waters also carry nutrients. Small animals in the water eat these nutrients.

Floods can help refill fresh water supplies. They can keep lakes from drying up. Floods also help marshes and swamps. Many animals depend on marshes and swamps. In dry seasons, they might dry up. But floods help refill the wetlands. They keep the ecosystem going.

Floods are a part of nature. They can be helpful. But they can also be harmful. Floods can destroy living things and the environment. But some ecosystems need floods to survive.



Quiz

1 What is the section “Some Floods Are Helpful” MAINLY about?

- (A) how floods feed animals
- (B) where floods harm animals and plants
- (C) when floods usually happen
- (D) how floods can improve environments

2 What is the article MAINLY about?

- (A) a fish that migrates
- (B) a kind of natural disaster
- (C) the nutrients that help plants
- (D) the importance of wetlands

3 Read the paragraph below from the section “Some Floods Are Helpful.”

Flood waters carry nutrients to the nearby land. Over time, the water dries up. It leaves behind particles of dirt and mud. These particles are called sediment. Sometimes, sediment can be good. It can improve the dirt. This helps plants grow.

What information can the reader get by reading this paragraph?

- (A) why floods can help soil
- (B) how floods carry disease
- (C) how floods help animals
- (D) why floods cause pollution

4 Which answer choice is a section title?

- (A) The many effects of flooding
- (B) Floods Can Cause Harm
- (C) Not everything about floods is bad.
- (D) Floods are a part of nature.

Answer Key

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