



# ANTARCTICA: Land of Snow and Ice

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# Life in Antarctica



Adélie penguins are one of the few animal species that can live in Antarctica.



Colorful lichens blanket rocks in parts of Antarctica.

It is hard to imagine how Antarctica looked 150 million years ago. Then it was still part of South America. The temperature was mild. The land was covered with rolling hills. Trees and plants made a soft, green covering, and many more forms of life lived there. Today, very few plants and animals can live in the cold, dry conditions. Yet the few that do live there are very interesting.

The climate of Antarctica is not a good place for plant life. Why? There is almost no soil. The plants that do live and grow in Antarctica are mostly mosses, liverworts, some kinds of algae, and lichens (pronounced LIGH-kuhnz).

Lichen is a group of small plants made up of a fungus and an alga, often found sticking to rock and wood. About 300 types of algae, 85 different kinds of mosses, 200 types of lichens, and 25 kinds of liverworts have been recorded to live in this land.

Two flowering plants grow only in sheltered spots. They are Antarctic hair grass and Antarctic pearlwort. There are also algae and lichens that blanket rock formations in colorful bursts of orange, red, yellow, green, and black. For such a barren land, this is an amazing display of color!