

Lesson 4: Explore Your Habitat

Target audience: K- 6th-grade youth

Time needed for station: 30 minutes

Volunteers needed to support station: one to two

Objectives

Youth will be able to:

- Name the four parts of a habitat
- Recognize that humans share the same basic needs as all other living things
- Build awareness of natural objects

Materials

PROVIDED

- Paper
- Crayons/markers
- Glue/sticks
- Pictures of human homes, animal homes, animals in a habitat, and examples of different habitats. (Start with pictures of forest, desert, grassland, and add local habitats that youth recognize.)
- 2 twin-size bedsheets and 5 bandanas
- Cards for Match the Habitat Game

NOT PROVIDED

- Optional: Pictures, cut out from magazines, that show examples of human and wildlife food, water, and shelter
- Examples of natural materials/plant parts for Activity 3: Plant Focus

Background Info

General description of how this activity connects families with nature and health:

Youth explore basic survival needs of humans and wildlife by drawing their own homes and neighborhoods. The awareness game is fun to play to help build neural networks while using natural objects and getting outdoors.

All forms of life need certain things to live. Survival depends on getting enough food, water, cover, and places to raise young. This activity focuses exclusively on animals, but plants, fungi and microbes share these same survival needs.

- **Cover** — protection from the elements (sun, rain, wind, etc.)
- **Habitat** — where an animal lives and gets the food, water, and cover it needs to survive.

WIN! Tip

Spending time in nature enhances educational outcomes by improving youth's academic performance, focus, behavior and love of learning
(Children & Nature Network, 2016).

Procedure

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

Collect natural objects (loose parts) from the natural area for Activity 3: Plant Focus.

1. Explain to participants that they will be learning about wildlife habitats.
2. Guide participants through Activity 1: What's Your Habitat?
3. Guide participants through Activity 2: Match the Habitat Game.
4. Explain to participants that they will be getting to know the local habitat around them. Take participants outside and guide them through Activity 3: Plant Focus. While outside, share the WIN! Tip (Background info).

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT'S YOUR HABITAT?

If your location allows you to explore nature to discuss what habitats are surrounding you, then you can go on a walk and discuss the following. This activity can be done indoors, too.

1. Ask "What do all humans need to survive? Which of these do plants and animals also require?" Focus on the four basic survival needs for all living things. Guide participants to generate a list with these needs: food, water, cover (shelter) and space to raise young.
2. Ask "Where do humans get the food, water, cover and places to raise their young that they need to survive?" "Where do animals get the food, water, cover and places to raise their young?" Generate a list verbally or write on a whiteboard. The Educator or volunteer may provide an example of their own home/neighborhood to show where he/she locates food (garden, grocery, or market), water (well, municipal water tower), cover (shelter, house, apartment) and places to raise young (hospital, home). Animals locate water (pond, creeks, and rivers), food (other animals and plants), cover (den, forest, and nest), places to raise their young (nest or burrow).
3. Facilitate an open discussion about protecting wildlife habitats. Stress the importance of not disturbing or taking away parts of wildlife habitats. How would we feel if our home was destroyed or our food taken away?
4. To modify for older youth, you may want to discuss where animals live on their property.

5. Pass out art materials to participants and ask them to draw their home. They can start with a picture of the house or building where they live. Tell them to leave space around the house to add other parts of their neighborhood where they meet their basic survival needs. The Educator or volunteer may provide pictures cut from magazines of basic things for survival (food, water, shelter). Potential habitat elements: well, water tower, hospital, grocery, and garden.

ACTIVITY 2: MATCH THE HABITAT GAME

Tell participants: "Now that you know a little more about what a habitat is, let us see if you can match the animal to the correct habitat." In this game, participants should look at the habitat and match the wildlife that they think would be most likely to live there. The Educator or volunteer may divide the group up into three teams if needed.

How to play the habitat game

1. The facilitator will hold up a habitat question card one at a time.
2. Give participants 10 seconds to look at the picture and question.
3. Participants will choose one of the animals from the animal cards to match the right animal to the habitat.
4. The facilitator may share what the correct answer is to the group. Some questions could have multiple answers. Encourage discussion.
 - Which animal lives in a river?
Fish
 - Which animal lives in a deep dark cave?
Mountain lion
 - Which animal gathers nectar from flowers?
Bee
 - Which animal lives in the forest?
Bear
 - Which animal lives in a pond?
Frog
 - Which animal lives in big trees in the forest?
Owl
 - Which animal lives under logs in the forest?
Salamander
 - Which animal lives in trees at the edge of lakes?
Eagle

ACTIVITY 3: PLANT FOCUS (OUTDOOR ACTIVITY)

To play this game:

1. Give each participant their own bandana to lay on the ground.
2. Lay a bedsheet on the ground. Without others looking, put various natural objects that you have found on the bedsheet; cover it with another bedsheet. Then reveal the objects and give the players 10 seconds to look at them before replacing the top bedsheet.
Tip: If it's windy outdoors, facilitators may need items to weigh down the corners of the bedsheet.
3. Give participants several minutes to find and bring back a sample of each item that they saw. Participants should place their samples on their bandanas. The facilitator should show the objects again and allow participants to see which ones they remembered and which they did not.
4. Ask questions such as: "What do you notice about the edges of this object? Are they smooth or jagged?" Give information about the objects' characteristics, e.g., color, shape, size, or texture.

You can challenge participants to place the objects they find in the same positions on their bandana as the originals are on the bedsheet, from memory.