

4. Connecting with Habitats: Home Sweet Home

(easily adapted for Junior Grades)

Source: All activities adapted from *Project Wild*. See Resources.

Description

The activities in this session will, in combination, give students an understanding of the concept of habitat, what animals need to survive, and the importance of preserving habitat. The first activity is a quick game of Animal Charades to spark students' knowledge of animals and where those animals live. "What's that, habitat?" will introduce students to the basic needs of all animals. Finally, a round of Habitat Lap Sit will illustrate the connections among all of the components (air, food, water and space) that together make up a healthy habitat.

Note: This activity is best for older primary and younger junior students

Background Information

Humans and other animals share some basic needs. Every animal needs a home – a place in which to live. The environment in which an animal lives is called its "habitat." An animal's habitat includes the food, water, shelter, air and space needed to meet an animal's needs. In ecosystems all things are interrelated and if any of these components of habitat are missing or are unhealthy it has an impact on the animals living in that habitat. The impact will not necessarily be catastrophic but can be and usually is widespread because of the numerous connections and interdependencies among plants and plants, plants and animals, and animals and animals within ecosystems. As a result, as we learn about animals we also need to learn about their habitats.

Materials

- an open space (in classroom or outdoors)
- habitat riddles (provided below)
- drawing paper and pencils/markers

Time Allotment

Introduction and Animal Charades: 15 minutes

"What's that, habitat?" (using habitat riddles as clues): 5-10 minutes

Habitat Lap Sit: 10-15 minutes

Discussion: 5 minutes

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. *Animal Charades*

a) This introduction involves a quick game of charades to get children thinking about animals and where they live. Explain to the children that during the session they will be talking about animals. This game helps

students to remember, and remind each other of, all the animals they know. Some students will have a chance to silently act out an animal while the others guess.

b) Have children come to the front to act out the animal they have chosen. This game is played exactly like charades.

- c) As each animal is acted out, list the animals on the board and have the students identify where the particular animal lives (forest, jungle, house, farm etc.).

2. “What’s that, habitat?”

- a) Identify humans as animals too, if not previously acted out as part of the introduction. Where do humans live? Talk about the idea that everybody needs a home, but that home is not just a ‘house’ such as people live in. An animal’s home, for many animals, is a much bigger place - and it’s outdoors. An animal’s home is more like a neighborhood that has everything in it that is needed for survival.
- b) Begin a discussion of what humans need to survive (food, water, air, shelter, space). Use the habitat riddles at the end of this section to act as prompts. Ask children to give specific examples of each from their own lives (e.g., house, grocery store, water, clean air, and a park to run and play).
- c) Discuss the fact that although the basic needs are the same for all animals, the arrangement of the necessary parts might be different - moose need more space than mice, wolves eat different things than deer, etc. The arrangement has to be right for each animal in order for it to be healthy and content.

3. *Habitat Lap Sit*

- a) Illustrate the importance of these different parts through “Habitat Lap Sit,” a quick game with high impact. Have the class form a circle; number the students off 1-5. Assign each number a category as follows: number ones - food, number twos - water, number threes – shelter, number fours – space, and number fives - air.

- b) Students should be standing shoulder to shoulder, facing the centre of the circle. Now ask the students to turn to their right and take a step toward the centre. Students should be standing close together, facing the back of the student in front of them.

- c) Everyone then places their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. On the count of three students slowly sit down on the knees of the person behind them, keeping their own knees together to support the person in front of them.
- d) You should then say, “food, water, air, space and shelter” in the proper arrangement (as represented by the intact ‘lap-sit’ circle), are what is needed to have a healthy habitat.”
- e) At this point the students may either fall down or stand up. When their laughter has subsided, discuss the necessary components of suitable habitat for people and wildlife.
- f) After students understand the major point - that food water, shelter, space and air are necessary for animals’ survival - let the students try the activity again!
- g) This time, connect some human actions and the weather to the health of the habitat. For example (adapt language as needed):
 - ▶ Drought: there hasn’t been enough rain and the earth is very dry (ask one or two ‘water’ students to leave the circle).
 - ▶ Urban sprawl: the forest is being cut down to make room to build more houses (ask one or two ‘space’ students to leave the circle)
 - ▶ Soil erosion: the soil is being blown away and there isn’t enough to grow lots of food (ask one or two ‘food’ students to leave the circle)

- Dam-building: the new dam flooded the marsh (ask one or two ‘shelter’ students to leave the circle)
 - Increasing vehicle use: there are too many SUVs on the road, causing major pollution problems (ask one or two ‘air’ students to leave the circle)
- h) Have students observe what happens when people leave the circle. The circle collapsing or suffering some major disruption represents the effect on animals when their habitats are disrupted. Discuss with students how all areas are interconnected.
- i) If time permits, have students draw a healthy habitat for one of the animals discussed earlier. Their drawing should show all the components necessary to provide a healthy habitat.

Follow-up Discussion Questions

- Ask students to describe their own “habitats.” What, in addition to their home, might be part of the students’ habitat?
- How are their habitats connected to the habitats of other animals in the area?
- Discuss what actions the students can take to help maintain healthy habitats, for themselves and other animals.

Extensions for additional classroom projects/activities

- Study the habitat in your local park or back yard - What animals live there? How are all their basic needs met in this habitat? What, if any, are the threats to their habitat?
- What can you do to help keep their habitat a healthy place for the animals to live?
- Create a habitat in your classroom by building a terrarium or aquarium.

Curriculum Connections: Clustering of Expectations

GRADE 1: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY—Needs and Characteristics of Living Things (2007)

- 1.1 identify personal action that they themselves can take to help maintain a healthy environment for living things, including humans
- 2.2 investigate and compare the basic needs of humans and other living things, including the need for air, water, food, warmth, and space, using a variety of methods and resources (*e.g., prior knowledge, personal experience, discussions, books, videos/DVDs, CD-ROMs*)
- OE 3 demonstrate an understanding of the basic needs and characteristics of plants and animals, including humans
- 3.4 describe the characteristics of a healthy environment, including clean air and water and nutritious food and explain why it is important for all living things to have a healthy environment
- 3.5 describe how showing care and respect for all living things help to maintain a healthy environment (*e.g., ...caring for the school and the schoolyard as an environment*)

GRADE 1: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY—Energy in our Lives (2007)

- 3.5 demonstrate an understanding that humans get the energy resources they need from the world around them and that the supply of many of these resources is limited so care needs to be taken in how we use them

GRADE 1: SOCIAL STUDIES (2005)

1z7 significant people and places in their lives (*e.g., parents, sports figures, bedroom, park, playground, community centre*) and the rules associated with them

GRADE 2: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY—Growth and Changes in Animals (2007)

1.2 identify positive and negative impacts that different kinds of human activity have on animals and where they live (*e.g., actions of animals lovers and groups that protect animals and their rights, the home owner who wants a nice lawn, people who visit zoos and wildlife parks, pet owners*), form an opinion about one of them, and suggest ways in which the impact can be minimized or enhanced

GRADE 2: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY—Air and Water in the Environment (2007)

3.3 describe ways in which living things, including humans depend on air and water (*e.g., most animals, including humans breathe air to stay alive; wind generates energy, disperses seeds; all living things need to drink or absorb water to stay alive; water is used for washing and bathing, transportation, energy generation*)

GRADE 3: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY—Growth and Changes in Plants (2007)

OE 1 assess ways in which plants have an impact on society and the environment and ways in which human activity has an impact on plants and plant habitats

1.1 assess ways in which plants are important to humans and other living things, taking different points of view into consideration, and suggest ways in which humans can protect plants

3.6 describe ways in which plants and animals depend on each other

Habitat Riddles (*from Earth Child*)

1. I'm something you need each day, especially after you run and play.
I fill you up as you drink me down; the tap is a place where I can be found.
— *water*
2. Your empty stomach can wiggle and pull; I fill it up until it's full. Sometimes
I'm eaten hot or cold. I'm kept in the kitchen in most households.
— *food*
3. Although I'm all around you, I can't be seen; to keep your body healthy I must
be clean. You breathe me in through your nose, but try to grab me and away I go.
— *air*
4. From wind and rain I keep you safe; I'm very necessary in this place. Look all
around you, for I'm sturdy and tall; you'll probably find me upon some wall.
— *shelter*
5. Take me away and you'd be cramped; no place to play and no place to stand.
To find me you'll need a rocket, you might presume. What I'm talking about
is elbow room!
— *space*