



ACTIVITY

Habitat Hunt

Summary:

Participants conduct a search for important habitat elements for several animals.

Grade Level:

3-6

Time:

1 hour or more, depending on time for research.

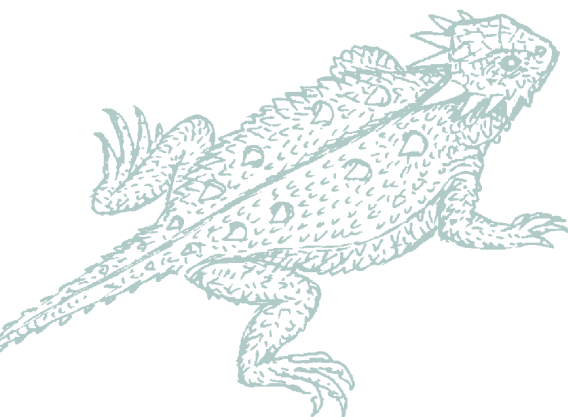
Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ◆ Define the term habitat, and the basic needs it must meet in order for wildlife to survive there.
- ◆ Differentiate between kinds of wildlife habitats.
- ◆ Apply understanding of habitats to find a suitable one outside.

Materials Needed:

- ◆ Copies of the Habitat Hunt worksheet
- ◆ Field guides, encyclopedias, or a good dictionary
- ◆ Pens or pencils



Background:

In order for an animal to survive, it must be able to find an adequate habitat that provides **food, water, cover, and a safe place to raise young**. The amount and quality of these needs varies a great deal from species to species. For this activity, it is a good idea to have a general wildlife guide, an encyclopedia, dictionary, or some old magazines with pictures and information on each animal.

Here are a few examples, some of which may be common animals in most areas, and others that may be quite rare or specific to an area.

Fireflies: For food, fireflies eat soft-bodied insects, snails, slugs, and mites (only in the larval stage; many don't eat anything in the adult stage). Water is from the food they eat, rain puddles, dew, or damp soil. Adult fireflies find cover in thick grass, under leaves. They lay eggs in rotting wood or damp debris on the ground, and larvae spend the winter just under the soil (this could be considered a place to raise young).

Lynx: These tufted-eared cats prey on small mammals (especially the snowshoe hare) and birds. They need a clean water source like a pond, spring, or lake. Lynx often seek cover under ledges, roots of fallen trees, or low branches, and also may lay in wait for prey up on

the branches of a tree. They raise young in hollow trees or in the nooks and crannies of boulders.

Cedar Waxwing: This sleek, brown, black-masked bird eats berries starting in late summer, and insects during the warmer months. They need a clean water source, such as puddles that return with regularity, ponds, etc. Cedar Waxwings prefer the edge of a forest, and so find cover in thick undergrowth or amongst trees that grow along the edge. They often make their nests on the branches of cedar or maple trees.

Horned Lizard: These spiny, flat lizards eat mostly insects, especially ants. For water, the horned lizard runs out into the rain and stands with its body spread wide to collect rain on the scales on its back. The rainwater moves along the narrow grooves between the scales, towards its head and into its mouth. It may find cover from the elements by digging into the sand, but it often relies on camouflage, laying flat and blending into the desert floor to escape predators. Most horned lizards bury their eggs underground.

Karner Blue Butterfly: As caterpillars, Karner Blues eat a plant called the wild blue lupine. As adults, they eat the nectar of various flowers such as butterfly weed and horse-mint. Adults get water from the nectar they eat and other incidental





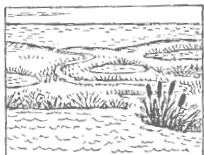
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WORKSHEET

DIRECTIONS: You are a _____, and in order to survive you need food, water, cover, and places to raise your young. Take a look around you. Record the following information and decide whether or not you will stay and set up home here. Good luck and have fun!



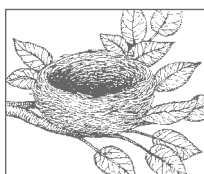
Food Source: _____



Water Source: _____



Cover: _____



Places to Raise Young: _____

Questions:

1. Will you stay and set up home here? _____

2. Why or why not? _____

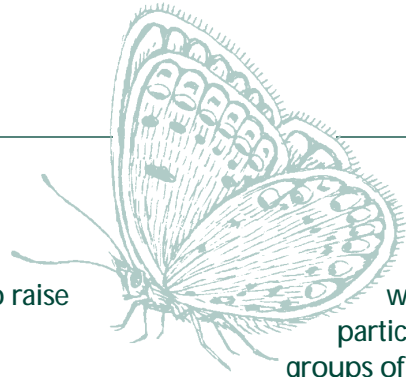
3. What other habitat elements would you like to see here? _____





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sources like rain or dew. Karner Blues need some tree cover as protection from the sun, but they need open spaces as well, since that is where the plants they feed on live. They lay eggs in the wild blue lupine, a crucial element in their life cycle.

What to Do:

1. Ask participants to review the four basic elements of habitat and the importance of each for an animal's survival.

2. Give participants the Habitat Hunt worksheet to be completed outside. Assign or let them choose a particular regional animal, and review the following directions:

You are a _____, and in order to survive you need food, water, cover and places to raise your young.

Take a look around you. *Do you see all the necessary habitat elements for you to survive here?*

Spend some time exploring this area. Look for all the characteristics of habitat that meet your specific needs. Based on what you find, you will decide to stay and call this area "home" or continue to look for a new place to call home. Describe the four elements of habitat you found that meet your needs (food,

water, cover, and place to raise young).

Will you stay and set up home for you and your family here? Why or why not? What other habitat elements would you like to see here?

3. It will be necessary for participants to identify the habitat needs of their individual animals prior to going outside to complete the worksheet. If time permits, set up a research station with field guides and other resource materials where they can investigate these needs. If desired, this could be done ahead of time as a research project. If time is short, provide basic information on individual animal needs to the participants.

4. Before sending participants outside, be sure to review appropriate safety considerations on page 17-18. Consider setting up "boundary lines" if participants have a large area to explore.

5. When participants return, wrap up by allowing them to share what they found on the hunt. Have the group identify which animals would be best suited to their habitat.

For Younger Participants (Grades K-2):

1. Introduce activity as in Step 1, above. Instead of handing out the

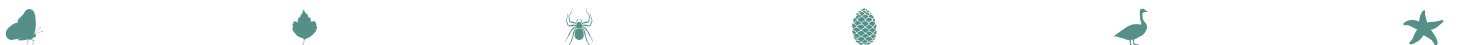
worksheet, break participants into groups of 6-10, and have a volunteer oversee small groups. Give each group a minute or so to choose an animal that may or may not live in the area (if they can't decide, choose one for them). Each volunteer should have a field guide or other resource material appropriate to the animal chosen (they can use the examples given in the background if no other sources are available).

2. Tell groups that they will first look for the right kind of food for their animal. The volunteer with the group should allow participants to try to guess what the animals eat, but they should help out with one or two suggestions if necessary. After a few minutes of searching, they should look for water, then cover, and finally, places to raise young.

3. After the group has searched for these elements, they should vote as to whether or not their animal would live in their area.

For Older Participants (Grades 7 and Up):

Ask each participant to research a particular animal's needs, beginning with food, water, cover, and places to raise young. On the back of the worksheet, ask them to include other elements, such as





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weather, geographical location, the amount of room they need, the amount of sunlight, the type of terrain they prefer, and so on. Ask participants if their animal spends all its time in one area or if it moves around.

Questions:

- What sort of food, water, cover, and places to raise young do local animals require?
- Where in this area do these four elements of habitat exist?
- What elements are missing?

Adaptations:

Refer to general adaptations on pages 11-16.

Hearing Disabilities:

- Have pictures and/or hands-on examples of different habitat elements for participants to see and explore.
- Position yourself and the sign language interpreter so the participants can see you for further directions or warnings while out in the field.
- Have a set meeting place in case individuals get separated.
- Allow participants to use the sign language interpreter to report their findings to the group.

Learning/Cognitive Disabilities:

- Have pictures and/or hands-on ex-

amples of different habitat elements for participants to see and explore.

- Have a variety of reference materials available, including picture books and recorded materials for individuals who have difficulty reading.
- Provide a picture of their animal of choice or have a set of pictures/facts available and allow participants to pick one.
- Provide background on each participant's animal before they start out as needed.
- Pair up participants who have difficulty reading and/or writing to complete the research and worksheet. Have participants dictate information to partners, use tape recorders, or draw pictures to represent their findings. Encourage partners to actively engage participants in the activity, but not do the work for them.
- Mark off the area with flags or strings.
- Have a set meeting place in case individuals get separated.
- If appropriate, have participants complete the younger participant version of the activity.

Motor Disabilities:

- Choose a largely accessible site to complete the outdoor portion of the activity.

For participants with limited muscle strength, coordination, or dexterity of the hands:

- Have participants who have difficulty writing dictate their input to a partner or use a tape recorder to complete the worksheet.

Visual Disabilities:

Overall:

- Have samples of different habitat elements for participants to feel and explore.
- Use sound effects when possible (e.g., bird calls, nature sound tapes, etc.) to illustrate your points.
- Clearly mark the area with a guide string on one side.
- Encourage partners to lead participants in using all their senses to help identify habitat elements.
- Have research materials available in alternative formats including Braille, large print, and recorded materials.

For participants with low vision:

- Have a large print version of the Habitat Hunt worksheet available. Provide thick black markers for use.

For participants who are blind:

- Have a Braille version of the Habitat Hunt worksheet available.
- If they do not have a method of writing available to them, have tape recorders available for participants to record their information or have them dictate their answers to a partner.

