

WILDLIFE HABITATS & YOU

LESSON FOCUS AND GOALS

The goal of this activity is to engage your students in their immediate surroundings so they can begin learning to see nature and observe changes over time. Many things that humans do impact nature negatively. In this exercise, students can perform tasks to improve the habitat to help wildlife.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Access to an outdoor space
- Optional: Native plants & tools for planting
- Trash bag
- Gloves
- Ability to find/add shelter elements like rocks & logs

MATERIALS PROVIDED

- Slides about ecology & the project for before students see the habitat
- Worksheets:
 - Observations
 - Trash Pickup
 - Word Search
 - Diversity Observations

BACKGROUND

All organisms live within habitats. Students must first understand how to identify types of habitats and what is present in a healthy habitat of this type (see associated slides).





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1


FIND A HABITAT

Before involving your class: Find a habitat on your school grounds that you can adopt, observe, and potentially improve. All habitats tell a story - developing the eyes to see that story takes time, observations, and practice .

2

BASICS OF ECOLOGY


In your classroom, review the basics of ecology with your class. What is ecology? What is a habitat and what types of habitats are there? What makes a good habitat? (RESOURCE: SLIDES)



3

READING THE LANDSCAPE

Take a classroom walk to the site. Have your class use **Worksheet 1** to make observations about the type of habitat and what they observe on the habitat. This could include things like trash, downed trees, water, shrubs, animals and more. Encourage students to explore. After students have finished their worksheets, ask them to share their observations with the classroom.



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HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS

4

It's time to start planning your habitat improvements! Habitat improvements do not necessarily have to be added to the site - sometimes removing things is helpful, too. Consider the following habitat improvements in relation to your habitat, taking into account the resources you have available. Then brainstorm with your class - they may come up with brilliant, novel concepts not found on this list.

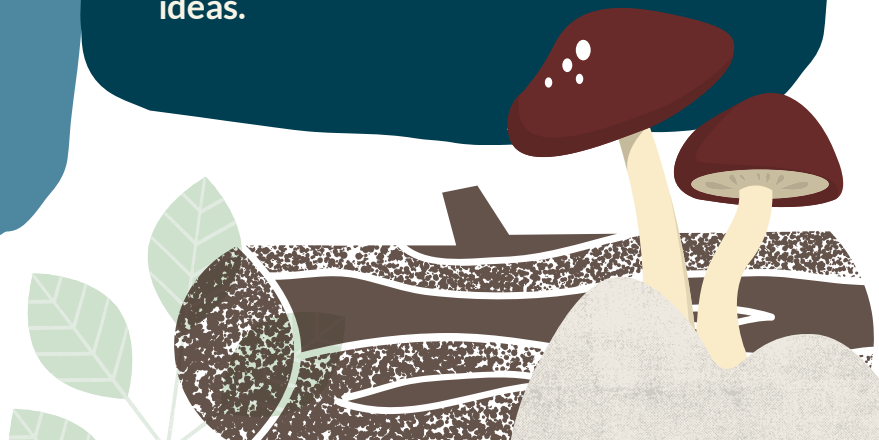
4A. REMOVE TRASH



Trash can have many detrimental effects on wildlife - for example, animals may become tangled in it, or eat it and become ill. Have students collect trash using gloves and trash bags. Once they have finished cleaning the site, have them record the trash they've found using [Worksheet 2](#). They will use this sheet each visit.


4B. ADDITIONAL FEATURES

Another improvement might be the addition of cover, water, or nesting spots. Wildlife needs a space to feel safe, watch for predators, and keep their young safe, too. Shrubs or brush piles can provide hiding or nesting spaces. Logs, rocks, or sticks can provide places for reptiles and amphibians to hide. See resources for ideas.



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4C. HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS: NATIVE PLANTS



One easy and beneficial way to improve wildlife habitat is to plant native plants. Unlike non-native plants, these have evolved with the animals that live in your area and thus provide more healthy habitat for wildlife. They've also evolved with the local climate and are therefore healthier themselves.

While it's true that some non-native plants support wildlife, too, native plants are much more beneficial to wildlife. When looking at any habitat, notice overstory plants, shrub layers, and herbaceous layers.

Grasslands may not have trees for overstory, but they do have different layers of plants that take advantage of sunlight at different layers. This might help you figure out what native plants to add to a habitat. See resources for native plant lists.





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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION:

(Here you can certify your classroom's wildlife habitat and also access information on attracting certain species, etc - great resource!)

<https://www.nwf.org/garden>

ECOLOGY

<https://www.esa.org/about/what-does-ecology-have-to-do-with-me/>

NATIVE PLANTS OF OREGON

<https://www.oregon.gov/ODF/Documents/AboutODF/NativeTreesPlants.pdf>

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/collection/native-plant-gardening>

FEATURES OF A HEALTHY WILDLIFE HABITAT

(For a comprehensive look at wildlife habitat attributes)

https://www.fs.fed.us/research/publications/gtr/gtr_wo89/gtr_wo89_04.pdf