Wild Ideas

What's In A Habitat?

To expand on the What's In A Habitat activity, try these supplemental projects:

1. Amazing Adaptations

As a class exercise, pretend to be astronauts who are sent to three fictional extreme environments on different planets. Encourage students to be as creative as possible. These environments could exist underground, at the bottom of an ocean, or could be completely made up. Give each environment a name, and describe its habitat: i.e. a desolate planet consisting of 100 sandy islands, surrounded by boiling oceans of chocolate. Other features could include two suns, rootless cork trees that bob in the oceans, giant purple crabs who consider the islands exclusively their territory, and deep throated chocolate sippers (tall, stork-like birds that live in the oceans).

Ask students to pretend that their spaceship has crash-landed in this environment. How would they have to adapt (both physically and through behavior) to survive? Ask each student to draw a picture of themselves in each environment, with labels that explain exactly how they have adapted.

2. Building A Habitat

Recruit the help of students to create a simple habitat in a fish tank. Research fish, plants and decomposers like snails or bottom-feeders that will be able to coexist. Through Q&A, have students explore how each element functions in the habitat – fish, fish food, a filter to keep the water clean, plants to naturally reduce carbon dioxide levels and nitrates in the water, plants or rocks to provide shelter or hiding spots for fish, gravel for the plants to take root, bottom-feeders like snails to help keep algae levels in check. Ask students to consider what might happen if you removed any of these elements. Ask students what effects light changes would have. What effects would this have on the habitat in the tank?

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3. Field Trip – Observing The Habitats Around You

Take students to a park, city street, local pond or forest. Ask them to independently record observations about the surrounding habitat. What kinds of plants and animals do they see? What are the weather conditions? Are there any visible sources of water or food? What other conditions exist in that habitat? Did they observe any interactions between animals and plants? Are there any humans present in the habitat? If so, how are they interacting with other living things? Are humans having a visible positive or negative effect on the environment?

In the classroom, ask students to read out their observations. Write their feedback on the blackboard to collectively describe, in as much detail as you can, the habitat you observed.

4. Protecting A Degraded Habitat

Teach students about a local habitat that has been damaged by human activity. It could be a local wetland, or an endangered species that has been displaced by farms, towns or highways. Are there any conservation groups working to restore the habitat? Find ways that students can get involved, by volunteering time to help, or by writing letters. The class might even find away to raise funds for conservation by hosting a bake sale, or by writing and performing a play about the cause. All proceeds from ticket sales could go toward supporting the restoration of the habitat.

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Life Connections

To expand on the Life Connections activity, try these supplemental projects:

Paper Chains

Have students construct a long paper chain, using strips of construction paper, markers and a stapler. Research different species found in a forest near you. Ask students to write the names of local plants and animals on the strips of construction paper. Then link them together, according to their place on the food chain. The chain could end up in one long line, but it will mostly likely end up as many joined chains.

Sun, Soil, Air, Water

Encourage students to learn more about the non-living elements we need to survive. Divide the class into four groups, one for each essential resource. Have them research these resources and present their projects to the class.

Once they've all presented, help them understand how these resources are linked: i.e. how water travels through soil and air, how air quality is affected by the sun, etc.

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Mapping Canada's Critters

To expand on the Mapping Canada's Critters activity, try these supplemental projects:

Understanding SARA

Introduce students to the Canadian federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). They currently classify 516 plant and animal species at risk in Canada. Visit **www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca** for more information. The website includes information on species at risk. Ask students to pick one and research about how its habitat has been degraded by human activity. Have students create a poster about the plant or animal, with facts about its habitat and the province(s) it lives in.

More About Endangered Species

Ask students to research the animals in Section B. Have them prepare a class presentation about the animals' habitat. They should include details about the geography of the country and continent where this animal is found.

Red List

Have students visit the Red List of Threatened Species at **iucnredlist.org** to learn more about the different categories that classify threatened species around the world: Extinct, Extinct in the Wild, Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable, Near Threatened, Least Concern or Data Deficient. Have students create a colour-coded chart that includes each category. Using data from the site, have students research one plant or animal for each category on their chart.

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