



Habitats for Sale



ACTIVITY

Summary:

Participants write classified ads for animal habitats.

Grade Level:

K-7

Time:

1 hour 30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ◆ Understand the concept of habitat and what living things need to survive.
- ◆ Creatively imagine and describe different habitats for different animals.
- ◆ Describe several ways living things adapt to their habitats.

Materials Needed:

- ◆ Reference books and resources on animals and animal pictures
- ◆ Pictures of different ecosystems (e.g., grasslands, coastal, forest, etc.)
- ◆ Paper and pencils
- ◆ Crayons/markers
- ◆ Real estate ads from local newspaper
- ◆ The outside version requires access to the outdoors, and natural materials (e.g., leaves, branches, pines cones) that participants can use to create an imaginative habitat.

For Younger Participants (K-2):

- ◆ Bulletin board supplies
- ◆ Tempera paints and brushes
- ◆ Construction paper
- ◆ Markers, crayons or colored pencils
- ◆ Pictures of animals
- ◆ Tape

Background:

An animal's **habitat** is the place in which it lives. In that place, an animal must be able to find **food, water, cover, and a place to raise young**. In some urban and suburban settings, commercial and residential development may disturb habitats to the point where animals can no longer meet these basic needs.

Habitat loss is the greatest threat to **biodiversity**, the variety of living things in a given area. Generally, an area that has a great deal of biological diversity will produce more goods (fruits, nuts, vegetables, lumber, etc.) and will be more resilient in the face of a natural disaster (disease, floods, etc.). A decline in biodiversity leaves an ecosystem depleted, unbalanced, and may eventually prevent it from functioning properly.

Note: *This activity has both an indoor and an outdoor version.*

What to Do:

1. If the group is not familiar with the concept of habitat, introduce the word "habitat." Explain that an

animal's habitat provides the food, water, cover and space it needs to survive and raise young.

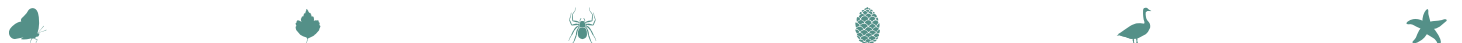
2. Brainstorm the names of different ecosystems (e.g., fields, forests, oceans, deserts, streams or rain forests) and animals that live in each ecosystem. Discuss how animals build special homes as a part of their habitats (e.g., beaver lodges, bird nests, and fox dens). These homes provide cover from weather, protection from predators and places to raise young. Point out that many animals—such as lions, fish and deer—do not build special homes but may use habitat features already there.



3. Tell participants that they will be playing a guessing game and then creating their own game—trying to find out

which animals would like to live in several different habitats. Show pictures and read a few sample real estate ads from a newspaper to give participants an idea of what they will be creating. Read these make-believe examples and ask them to guess which animals might answer each ad.

- **Great Grasslands:** Prime grassland available in Africa. Loaded with antelope, springboks, zebras and other tasty prey. Close to





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refreshing water holes and shady clumps of acacia trees. Lots of wide-open territory. Great for new pride. Call before this great buy is snatched up. (Answer: Lion)

- **Underground Castle:** Lots of tunnels available in the Smith family's backyard. Home to juicy earthworms and other tasty creatures. Loose, moist soil for easy tunneling and no pesky cats in the neighborhood. This super backyard buy is available immediately. (Answer: Mole)

4. Explain to participants that they will create a classified ad that describes an animal's habitat and/or home. Write animal names on slips of paper or find pictures of animals (examples: squirrel, hedgehog, orangutan, vampire bat, bison, rat, blue whale, snake, owl, leopard, dolphin, duck, weasel, camel, wart hog, black bear, fox, prairie chicken, penguin, elephant, trout, woodpecker, earthworm, spider, eagle, wolf, cricket, crab).

5. Have each person (or groups of 2-3) choose a slip of paper or picture and then create a classified ad that includes a description of where the animal finds food, water, cover and a place for raising young, without giving away the identity of the animal. They may write the ad and supply it with a drawing of the animal in its habitat. Provide reference books and resources. Ask each

person or group to write a classified ad for a habitat that would appeal to his or her animal.

6. Display a list of all the animals chosen for participants to see. Ask participants to take turns reading their classified ads aloud to the group. The group then guesses which animal goes with which ad. Discuss how some ads might fit more than one animal and how some animals might adapt to fit into a habitat that is not their ideal home.

7. After everyone has had their turn, have participants draw the habitat he or she wrote about, including the animal. You may want to post these drawings in a prominent place.

Outside Version:

1. Instead of creating a written classified ad, ask each person to select an animal. After everyone researches his/her animal's needs, take the group outside to collect items (leaves, sticks, grass, sand) that are part of their animal's habitat. If possible, have volunteers oversee small groups. Review appropriate collection techniques and safety considerations (pages 17-18).

2. Once they find appropriate materials, ask participants to use their imaginations and the materials they have collected (e.g., a pile of rocks

with a space under it could represent a cave) to create a demonstration habitat for that animal.

3. Have each person explain the habitat and ask the group to guess which animal(s) could live in it. Discuss how some habitats might fit more than one animal and how some animals might adapt to fit into a habitat that is not their ideal home.

For Younger Participants (K-2):

Create a large tree on a bulletin board or felt board. Have participants paint the trunk, background, and leaves, and/or cut out construction paper leaves. Provide each person (or small teams) with at least one picture of an animal that lives in or around a tree. (e.g., robin, owl, squirrel, chipmunk, ant, fox, porcupine, bat, spider, cardinal, tree frog/toad) Have participants color and cut out their animals and add them to the area in or around the tree where they think the animal lives.

For each animal, review what it would eat, where it would find water, cover, and whether the tree





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provides adequate space for it to live. Ask the group if they also want to add other things to the bulletin board to create a better habitat for the animals there (e.g., a stream or pond, or other trees). Mention that some homes in and around the tree might fit more than one animal and how some animals might adapt to fit into a habitat that is not their ideal home (i.e., a raccoon in an urban/suburban area).

Adaptations:

Refer to general adaptations on pages 11-16.

Hearing Disabilities:

- Encourage participants to actively participate in the discussion. Allow participants who have difficulty speaking to use the sign language interpreter to give their presentations to the group.

Learning/Cognitive Disabilities:

- Have a variety of reference materials available, including picture books and recorded materials for individuals who have difficulty reading.
- Have tape recorders available for participants who have difficulty writing to create their ad text or allow participants to create a habi-

- Provide pictures of all the animals represented in the group along with the names for individuals who have difficulty reading (Step 6).

Motor Disabilities:

For the outside option:

- Choose a largely accessible site.
- Provide bags with handles for collecting items.
- Encourage the use of adaptive equipment such as reachers for collecting items.

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

- Have adaptive scissors available.
- Have glue sticks available.
- Provide tape recorders for participants who have difficulty writing to record their ad information or have them do an oral report.

Visual Disabilities:

Overall:

- Use touchable examples to illustrate habitat components.
- Have reference materials available in alternate formats such as Braille, large print, and/or recorded materials.
- Have participants use their own writing equipment, have a Braille writer available, and/or provide

small tape recorders for individuals to use to create the text for their ads.

- Have participants who have difficulty drawing make a clay sculpture of their animal (Step 7).

For participants with low vision:

- Provide drawing paper and thick black markers for participants to use to complete their ads.
- Provide a variety of magnifiers.

For the outside version:

- Provide bags with handles for collecting items.
- Encourage partners to actively guide the participant through the collection process and avoid doing this part of the activity for them.

For the K-2 version:

- Have participants who are blind make animals out of pom-poms, pipe-cleaners, feathers, or clay instead of coloring pictures. Have pre-cut leaves or tissue paper available for participants to place on the living tree.

