CANADIAN WILDLIFE FEDERATION

30 - 45 minutes

Discover Your Place in Your Habitat

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Learn the four basic components of habitat.
- Explore their own habitat needs.
- Discover that humans and wildlife share the same ecosystems.

Method

Students create a personal habitat map to explore their own habitat requirements and conduct research to discover how they fit into the bigger picture.

Materials

- Coloured pencils, markers or other drawing materials
- Paper

Background

All living things need healthy habitat to survive. Habitat means home, but it's more than just shelter. The four basic components of habitat are **food**, **water**, **shelter** and **space**.

The way in which habitat elements are arranged is important too. It would be very inconvenient if your kitchen were in the next township! Even so, caribou trek long distances searching for food.

Every creature needs space to roam, hunt, and breed. Yet these needs vary from species to species. For example, wild turkeys need 40 hectares of woodland, while ruffed grouse will settle for four.

Where Do You Fit In?

Humans are part of nature. We have evolved over millions of years just like other organisms. Just as wildlife leave their shelters to find food, we leave our homes to buy food at neighbourhood stores. Yet unlike other creatures, we exercise control over our habitats:

- We pipe drinking water from far away.
- We eat foods imported from other countries.
- If we don't like the weather, we turn on the furnace or air-conditioner.

Humans don't have to wait for thousands of years to adapt biologically. Instead of growing a thick coat of fur when winter blows in, we pull on our long johns and woolly sweaters. We even end up altering wildlife habitat, filling in swamps to build houses and spraying pesticides on fields to kill bugs.

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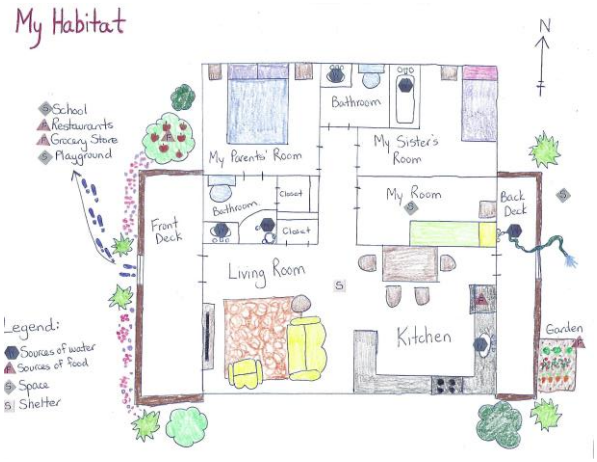
Activity

1. Introduce the four components of habitat and have students brainstorm a list of ways in which humans arrange these habitat elements to suit their needs better. Can wildlife do the same?
2. Have students draw a map of their own habitat and mark where they find food, water, and shelter. Remind them to draw themselves in their habitat. Encourage students to also look at how the habitat elements on their map are arranged. How close together or far apart are they?



- **Food:** Note things like the refrigerator, your garden, supermarkets and restaurants.
- **Water:** Note things like taps, wells, rain, lakes and rivers.
- **Shelter:** Includes the roof above your head and any protection from the natural elements.
- **Space:** Could include your yard, the street, field or park where you play

3. How much space do we need? Further explore the concept of space by cordoning off half the classroom or all the rooms in your house except for one.
    - Have students try manoeuvring in these newly crowded quarters.
    - Discuss how each person feels about the situation.

4. Now, look beyond your habitat at the bigger ecosystem. There can be many habitats within an ecosystem. An **ecosystem** is defined by its biotic (living) elements, such as animals and plants, and abiotic (non-living) elements, such as rocks, air, and water. These biotic and abiotic components are linked together through nutrient cycles and energy flows.
5. Have students conduct their own research to answer the following questions:
    - What type of ecosystem do you live in? - A boreal forest? A prairie grassland?
    - What are some of the plants and animals that share your ecosystem? How are their habitats the same or different from yours?
    - How have humans have changed things in your ecosystem? Do these changes help or hinder wildlife?
    - Are species disappearing from your area?
      If so, find out why.

For additional resources visit:
CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Education

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