



Home is Where There's Habitat Educator Guide



Home is Where There's Habitat

Through this educational kit, kids will learn the importance of habitat to wildlife, themselves, their communities, provinces or territories, country and planet. They will be introduced to the components of habitat and become aware of areas that have been impacted by human activity. Through both large- and small-scale projects, students can also support wildlife and habitat in their own backyards, schoolyards and communities.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Discover how humankind and habitats are linked and explore perspectives on habitat from wildlife's point of view;
2. Grapple with the challenge of coexisting with wildlife, so that all living things can thrive;
3. Research and analyze the health of an ecological area, pinpoint problems, and envision solutions;
4. Create an action strategy, then enlist the support of parents, neighbours, and local businesses to put it into action;
5. Follow up and maintain projects that will contribute to a healthier planet and instill a lasting sense of responsible stewardship.

Learning Journey

1. Begin with the activity [Discover Your Place in Your Habitat](#).
 - Discuss the importance of habitats to all living things and how can humans help or harm these natural homes.
 - Discuss how ecosystems and habitats fit together.
2. Next, lead students through the activity [Habitats Need Your Help](#) to explore some of Canada's crucial habitats, wildlife residents, and how they are being protected.
3. Once students are familiar with the basics, they will be ready to research and diagnose the health of their habitat according to the third activity, [Assess Your Habitat's Health](#).
4. Now that students have a deeper understanding of the human factors impacting habitat health in their area, encourage them to take action! Have them brainstorm habitat projects they can do to enhance habitat in the backyards, schoolyards and communities, or search through CWF's library of [Habitat Projects](#) for ideas.

For additional resources visit:

CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Education

Key Concepts

The following key concepts are explored within this educational kit:

- Habitat is the type of natural environment in which a particular species lives. It consists of four components – food, water, shelter and space.
- Habitat is complex and can't be defined within a clear border.
- 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, plus the way in which all those elements interact.
- Canada is a mosaic of vastly different habitats. Many are considered irreplaceable because they are crucial to the survival of a variety of species: wetlands, arctic tundra, and old-growth forests are just a few of them.
- The biggest problem facing wildlife today is habitat loss and disruption. Much of this is caused by human development.
- A variety of areas in Canada protect wild creatures and ecosystem diversity. They include national parks, world heritage sites, and more.

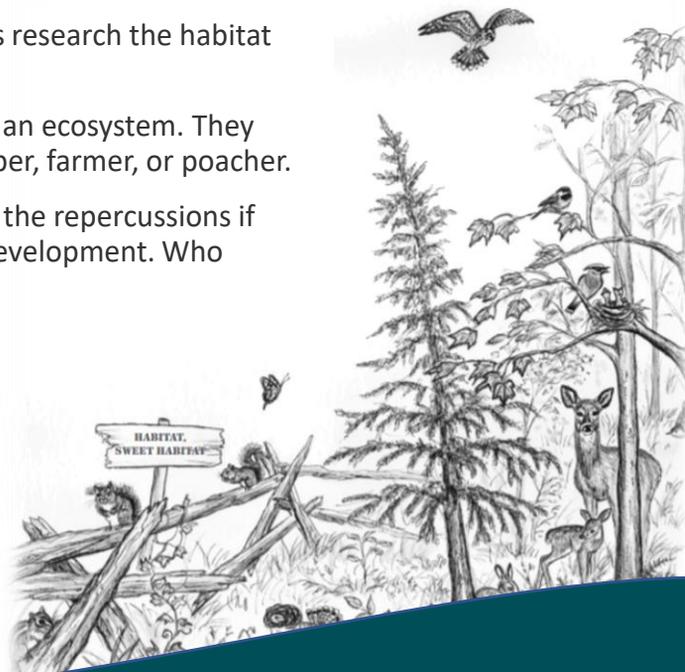
Evaluation

Determine whether students have grasped important learning objectives through the following exercises:

- Pick species' names from a hat and have students research the habitat that would suit each plant's or animal's needs.
- Have students play the roles of several species in an ecosystem. They could argue their cases to a polluter, land developer, farmer, or poacher.
- Choose a habitat hot spot. Have students discuss the repercussions if a particular vulnerable area were wiped out by development. Who or what would be affected, and why?

Vocabulary

abiotic, alien species, aquatic, biodiversity hotspot, biosphere reserve, biotic, deciduous, ecosystem, ecozone, food, generalist, habitat, land trust, migratory bird sanctuary, monoculture, national park, national wildlife area, native species, provincial park, Ramsar sites, rural, shelter, space, specialist, stewardship, succession, urban, water, world heritage site



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Student Action Projects

Helpful Tips

- Always obtain permission first from your school principal and, if applicable, from your municipality or landowners. Keep these key participants involved and advised throughout your project. Check with your area bylaws inspector or conservation authority in case there are regulations you must follow.
- Remind students that there are no quick fixes to improve wildlife habitat. Some of the most productive projects take years to unfold.
- Have students develop a realistic project plan. Include diagrams, estimated costs, and an explanation of why the project is a good idea.
- Collaborate with landowners first if you have your eye on private land as the perfect project spot. Be respectful and clear about your plans when asking for permission. Provide a written outline as well.
- Cooperate with communities. Get as many volunteers involved with habitat projects as possible. A collaborative network will ensure success.
- If doing a planting project, always use plants, trees, and shrubs native to your area.
- Form a committee of volunteers to care for your project through the summer.
- Involve other grades, schools, experts, and community volunteers to give your project a strong foundation.
- Don't be discouraged. If projects don't work out, there's a great opportunity to discover what went wrong. The process of creating habitat is not clear-cut. It is a complex exchange between your efforts and how plants and animals respond.

Minimizing Vandalism

Vandalism decreases when people feel a sense of responsibility towards a project. When people feel involved, they're more likely to report disturbances in the project area. Help minimize vandalism towards your habitat project by taking the following steps:

- Get the whole school involved in your project and keep school maintenance staff informed and involved from the start.
- Get as many people in the community involved in your project as possible, like neighbours, parents, and community volunteers.
- Post several signs displaying the name and explaining the purpose of the project.
- If vandalism occurs, repair the damage and carry on.
Persistence wins out in the end.

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