



Habitat

Grade Level: K-1st

Time: 30 minutes – 1 hour

Materials: Stuffed animal from IDFG, Jerome, picture of chosen habitat, plant samples from the chosen habitat.

Introduction

This activity introduces the concept of habitat. Children will explore the interconnection between animals, plants, and topography. This activity introduces the basic needs of animal species and why high quality plant health and diversity is essential for their livelihood. In this exercise children will learn the difference between good and poor habitat conditions.

Activity

- Have children create a circle.
- Pass around a picture of the habitat you will be introducing. For example if you are introducing Sage-grouse habitat you will want to pass out a picture showing a healthy sagebrush biome which includes grasses, forbs, and sagebrush.
- Ask children what they see in the picture. Focus answers on the variety of plant species shown in the picture.
- If it is the right season pass around plant samples. (ie: Sagebrush, grasses, and small forbs)
- Introduce the animal specie. I will be using the Sage-grouse. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has several stuffed species in their Jerome office.
- Tell children that they are now all sagebrush. Split the circle in half assigning one part to be regular size sagebrush. Kids will kneel. Tell the other half they are large sagebrush and that they should stand. Explain that the center of the circle is an open grassy area.
- Ask for a volunteer. Tell the class that this volunteer is now a sage-grouse. Explain to the class that you are a coyote or another predator. Move the Sage-grouse (have the volunteer kneel) behind the shorter sage brush. Ask the class if the coyote can see the grouse. Now move the sage-grouse in back of the tall sagebrush and ask the class if the coyote can see the grouse.
- Do this activity again. This time you will be introducing a taller grass into the habitat. Count out one half 1,2,1,2,1... and then count the other half of your circle the same way:1,2,1,2... 1's will be (standing)grass , 2's sagebrush (keep the original kneeling and standing sagebrush). This time have the sage-grouse hide behind both halves. This should show that both habitats are now better equipped to provide shelter and protection. The diversity of plant species creates a more suitable habitat for the grouse.
- Regroup and tell the kids what the sage-grouse eats: sagebrush and in the spring forbs. So a more diverse sagebrush biome is more ideal than a habitat with only sagebrush.
- Explain the mating ritual of the grouse and how they need the open area (inside of the circle) in order to display to attract a mate. Sage-grouse make their nest under sagebrush. When young hatch they need a variety of forbs to ensure good nutrition.



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Activity Cont.

1st Grade: Break class into groups. Assign each group a local animal. Each group will draw 1) A good habitat for their animal 2) A poor habitat for their animal

If time allows invite each group to share their drawings with the rest of the class.

Materials: Crayons, paper.

Kindergarten: Choose another animal and as a class reenact

Conclusion

Ask what 3 things animals need in a habitat:

- 1) Shelter/protection
- 2) Year round food supply (more plant diversity=a greater variety of food)
- 3) Ability to re-produce