

Animal Habitats

*Illinois Goals and Standards**Science: 11.A, 12.B, 13.A Math: 6.A English Language Arts: 4.A, 5.A*

Program Overview

The first part of the program will provide students with background information on habitats. During this component students will learn about different types of habitats and some common adaptations of the animals that live within them. After this brief content introduction, students will travel to a zoo exhibit to conduct their own habitat observation. While observing different animal exhibits, they'll record habitat descriptions and animal adaptations on provided data sheets. At the end of the observation, they'll review their data sheets and share what they observed with their peers.

Program Objectives

- Students will observe and describe animal adaptations that help with survival in a particular habitat.
- Students will differentiate between different types of habitats.
- Students will identify necessary components for survival within any habitat.
- Students will record data based on careful observations.

Background Information

Different types of habitats are home to different types of animals. Animals that live within a particular habitat often have adaptations or traits that help with survival within that habitat. Some animals have adaptations that make them especially suited for one habitat, but not for another. For example, a seal is well-equipped for life in the water, but not a sandy desert. Other animals have adaptations that help them survive in a variety of habitats.

To survive in any habitat, an animal must have access to food, water, shelter and space. In some habitats, adaptations help one type of species better access these needs than another. For example, the long neck of a giraffe helps it reach leaves at the tops of trees. An animal with a heavy fur coat like a polar bear might need less shelter in the tundra than an animal without this natural protection.

Scientists describe and define habitats in many ways and with great complexity and detail. For this activity however, we'll be using a more simple approach aligned with the developmental needs of your students. We will focus on the following six habitats:

*Forest**Wetland**Aquatic**Desert**Tundra**Grassland*

How to Prepare

While preparation is not required for a successful visit, reviewing a few basic skills before your visit can help make your students' experience more meaningful.

- To support the data collection activity, review how to make tally marks with students as well as how to add tally marks to reach a total.
- To support the data-collection activity, review how to draw and label an accurate representation of a habitat or object.
- To support sharing discoveries, review the vocabulary below and how to respectfully share ideas with peers.

Vocabulary:

Adaptation

Environment

Habitat

Forest

Wetland

Aquatic

Desert

Tundra

Grassland



Back at School

Extend the Inquiry

We hope you'll continue your explorations even after your visit. We've provided a few ways you can extend inquiry-based explorations of habitats to the classroom.

- Survey the habitat in your schoolyard. What type of habitat is it and how do you know? What animals live in this habitat?
- Compare the habitat in your schoolyard with one that you observed at the zoo. Complete a Venn diagram comparing the habitats.
- Look at pictures of various animals. Research how each animal has adapted to survive in its habitat.

Connect Across the Curriculum

These are a few ways you can connect your science investigations with other areas of the curriculum.

Visual Arts

- Have students design a zoo exhibit for an animal of their choice. They should draw their design with as much detail as possible and label important exhibit components.

Social Studies

- As a class, explore the different habitats that can be found within the state of Illinois. How is Illinois similar to and different from other states in the country?

English Language Arts

- Have students select a habitat of their choice and pretend they are a scientist doing research in this area. Have them create a journal entry that details the type of plants and animals they would encounter and the discoveries they might make.