National Education Nature Park

Introduction to habitats

This presentation guides classes through classifying different habitats in the UK by looking closely at the plants that live there.

After classifying different types of woodland, grassland, and wetland, learners are encouraged to think about the animals that might live there.

Teaching time

30-45 minutes

Learning outcomes

- explain the definition of a habitat
- describe some ways in which habitats are different from one another
- describe some reasons why certain animals are found in some habitats and not others

Step by step

1. Have learners list the categories of plants that they can remember (trees, wildflowers, grass etc.)

2. Introduce the definition of a habitat.

> A habitat is the place where a plant or an animal lives.

3. Work through the presentation to introduce the idea that the different needs of living things determine what habitats they can survive in.

4. Work together as a class to identify differences between woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands.

- list some ways that the types of habitats are different from one another
- list some animals that might live in a woodland/grassland/wetland
- describe some ways that the animals depend on the plants growing in that habitat

5. Contrast the photos of different types of woodland/grassland/wetland.

What differences can learners identify?

How might those differences pose challenges or opportunities to animals living there?

Green Skills

Suitable for

Key Stage 1
Key Stage 2

Location

Indoors

Season

Spring
Summer
Autumn
Winter

What you'll need

Introduction to habitats presentation

Pens and paper

Introduction to habitats worksheets

Key vocabulary

Habitat
Deciduous
Evergreen

Support and extension opportunities

Learners might look at several photos of one type of habitat and look for similarities.

Groups might be assigned to work on one group of habitats (woodland, grassland, or wetland) and use books or the internet to find out what animals and plants live there.

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Options for the Introduction to habitats worksheets

Habitat photos

- Compare the two photos on each sheet to identify similarities and introduce some of the main features of woodlands, grasslands, or wetlands.
- Contrast the three habitat sheets to look for differences between the habitats and think about the challenges or opportunities those differences might present to living things.

Animal photos

- Use photo sets as a starting point for exploring what animals live in each habitat.
- Use the included information to think about how the animals are suited to living in each habitat.
- Cut off the heading of the animal worksheets and have learners match the animals to woodland, grassland, or wetland and explain their thinking.
- Research or think about other animals in each habitat to fill out a food chain or web for each habitat. How do the animals depend on the specific types of plants in each habitat?
- For an additional challenge, learners can try to match the animals to one of the more specific habitats.

  evergreen woodland – goldcrest, 18-spotted ladybird

  These animals specialise in eating insects that hide between pine needles or insects that are adapted to eating from tough evergreen leaves.

  broadleaved woodland – hazel dormouse, blackcap

  These animals feed on a variety of fruit and nuts produced by broadleaved plants. Evergreen trees such as pines produce their seeds in tough woody cones.

  meadow – striped snail, sheep, meadow pipit, gatekeeper

  These animals prefer habitats with taller grasses than most lawns provide. Meadows also have more wildflowers, which are important food for adult gatekeeper butterflies. Sheep also benefit from a greater variety of plants to eat.

  pond – common blue damselfly, frog, ramshorn snail

  These animals tend to need still or slow-moving water so they do not get swept downstream. River animals tend to be strong swimmers or have bodies adapted to gripping onto rocks and gravel so they don't get swept away by the current. Mallard ducks can be found in almost any wetland habitat.

Background information

The habitats in this presentation are the habitat categories in the Nature Park habitat mapping activities.

The type of habitat that develops in an area is determined by the climate and the underlying soils and rocks. These characteristics are difficult to see in the field, but plants can be used as indicators. Different habitats have distinctive plant communities because plants cannot get up and move to more suitable locations. Plants are the foundation of most food chains, so the plant community in an area often shapes the animal community as well.

- **woodlands** mainly have trees in the area
- **grasslands** mainly have grasses or wildflowers
- **wetlands** are very wet or watery

Habitats can be further divided by looking closely at what types of trees or wildflowers grow in the area.

Woodlands

- **Evergreen woodlands** have mostly evergreen trees such as pine or spruce. These habitats tend to form in areas that get less rain and have colder, snowier winters.

- **Broadleaved woodlands** have mostly broadleaved or deciduous trees such as oak or maple. These habitats tend to form in areas that get a bit more rain and have warmer winters with less snow.

- **Temperate rainforests** are woodlands that get much more rain. The trees are usually deciduous, and they are often covered in mosses and liverworts. Both are special types of plants that thrive in wet places. In addition to more rain, these habitats form in areas with mild winters and lots or humidity.

Grasslands

- **Meadows** are places with mostly short plants that don't have trunks or stems made of wood. They have a mix of grasses and wildflowers. In the UK, many habitats are meadows because they are grazed or cut in a way which prevents large trees from growing. Without this management, many places would eventually become woodland through a process called *succession*.

- **Lawns** are areas with mainly grasses. There are often few wildflowers because lawns are cut or mown, which cuts off the leaves and growing parts of many types of wildflowers.

Wetlands

- **Ponds** have still water and are home to many types of floating plants and animals

- **Rivers** have flowing or moving water. Things that live here need to be strong swimmers or be able to cling to rocks or gravel at the bottom of the river.

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