



Habitat Tags

Science – Grade 4-6

Students identify and explore components of habitat naturally existing in a given area.

Materials:

- Construction paper (yellow, blue, red, and green)
- Chalkboard or poster
- Colored chalk or markers
- String
- Scissors
- Reference materials
- Habitat Tag worksheet (see following page)

Instructions:

Your site may already provide adequate habitat for some animals, students may have seen squirrels romping around in nearby trees or heard songbirds in the spring. This activity may answer questions as to what these animals are finding in your schoolyard and what they and other species might lack. Identifying and locating the elements of habitat already present on school grounds represents the first step in restoring wildlife habitat.

1. Cut construction paper into “tags” (quarter page, rectangles) and punch a single hole in the top. Make enough so that there are four tags, one of each color to represent the elements of habitat, for every two students. Cut a 12” length of string for each card.

Yellow= food, Blue= water, Red= cover, Green= Places to raise young

2. Review the four basic elements of habitat and the importance of each for animal survival. Have the students think of an example of each of the elements. Explain to the students that they are about to become an animal in search of a place to make a home. Tell the students that their new habitat needs to provide all of these elements.

Water such as from a ditch, a birdbath, or any water feature.

Source of food such as insects, berries, leaves, and other plant material.

Shelter that provides cover such as under big rocks, inside old logs, and within and covered by plant material.

Shelter that provides places to raise young can be in shallow pools of water, dense grasses, shrubs, trees, etc.

3. On a chalkboard or poster board, brainstorm with the group a list of wildlife that might live in your area. Pair students together and have them each choose one of the animals from



the list. Ask the group if all the animals that were chosen have the same needs. Then ask if all of these needs are provided in the same way. Ask if they think the element of *places to raise young* would be the same for a lizard as it is for a raccoon or a songbird. Tell the students they will be exploring in an area outdoors in search of each of the elements of habitat they need to survive. Before they can look for those elements, they need to know what those elements are.

4. Pass out the Habitat Tag worksheet. Have partners work together using field guides, reference materials, and resource links at www.jmgkids.org/wildlifegardener to identify the types of food, water, cover and places to raise young that their animals require. Have partners record their finds in the Needs column of the Habitat Tag worksheet.
5. Once students have completed the Needs part of the worksheet, tell them they will now go on a search to find an area that provides those needs. Define the outdoor area for the group to explore. Before going outside, review safety rules with the class and determine if students will stay together as a group, or will be allowed to investigate the school grounds on their own.
6. Provide sets of habitat tags to each set of partners. Tell students they should tie their tags to mark the location of a habitat element for their animal. It is also a good idea to have students write the name of their species on each tag so they will be able to tell them apart from those of other wildlife and to find elements of habitat that provide for different animals.
7. While students are outside, have them think about the following:
 - a. All animals need food, water, cover, and a safe place to raise their young to survive.
 - b. When outside, take a look around you. Do you see the necessary habitat elements for the animal you have chosen to survive here? Spend some time exploring this area. Look for all the characteristics of habitat that meet your specific needs. Based on what you find, decide to stay and call this area “home,” or continue to look for a new place to live.
 - c. It’s possible that not all the students will find all four elements for their animals, but their challenge is to thoroughly explore the area.
 - d. On your Habitat Tag page, describe the four elements of habitat you found that meet your needs: Food, Water, Cover, Places to Raise Young.
 - e. Note where you found each element. Are they spaced close together or spread out over the area?
 - f. Decide whether you (as the animal) would stay and set up home here. Why or why not? What other habitat elements would need to be added for you to stay here?



8. After they place each tag, students will use the Habitat Tag worksheet to record what and where they found all or some of what they need to survive. While outside, be sure to help students in they feel unable to identify the elements.
9. Once all students are finished, tour the area together and collect the tags. Discuss the habitat elements each flag signals. Have each “animal” share what they found with the group about how the area provides for their own needs. Have the class assess its findings. If possible, use a chalkboard, dry erase board, or overhead transparency to draw a simple map of the area explored during the activity. Have each student come to the board and add the location of the elements they tagged to the map. Each element should be represented by the corresponding color of chalk (or marker). As a class, discuss the maps. Which areas on the schoolyard have the most habitat elements? How many different species might each section support? Ask each student to decide if this site would be part or all of the animal’s habitat. What habitat elements would need to be added to enhance or create adequate wildlife habitat?
10. Challenge students to think about how the availability of certain habitat elements might change through the seasons. Would water be more difficult to get for wildlife in the summer or winter? Are small streams, ponds, and puddles they may have seen available for wildlife all the time? What about food?



Habitat Tag Worksheet

You are a _____ and in order to survive you need food, water, cover, and places to raise young.

List examples of what you tagged below and decide whether you'll stay and set up home here.

Good luck and have fun!

Habitat Hunt Tags

Yellow: Food

Red: Cover

Blue: Water

Green: Places to raise young

Needs

Food source: _____

Water source: _____

Cover: _____

Places to raise young: _____

Questions

Will you stay and set up home here? _____

Why or why not? _____

What would make this area a better home for you? _____
