Aquatic Lap Sit

Extension Activity for "Aquatic Adaptations"

Objectives:
Students will be able to:

1. identify the components of wetlands;

2. recognize how humans and other animals depend upon wetlands;

3. interpret the significance of loss of or change in wetlands in terms of people and wildlife.

Method:
Participants physically form an interconnected circle to demonstrate components of wetlands.

Time:
20 minutes

Materials:
poster board or construction paper to make signs

coloring markers

string or masking tape to attach signs to students

Background:
People and animals share some basic needs. Every animal needs a place to live. The environment in which an animal lives is called a habitat. An animal's habitat includes oxygen, food, water, shelter, and adequate space in an arrangement appropriate to the animal's needs.

An impact will be seen if any of these habitat components are missing or are drastically affected. The impact will not always be catastrophic, but it can be. There are many additional limiting factors beyond those of suitable food, water, shelter, and space. For example, disease, predation, pollution, accidents, and climatic conditions can have an impact on the habitat.

All things are interrelated. When we look at a biological community, we find relationships and interdependencies between plants and plants, plants and animals, as well as animals and animals. These relationships and interdependencies are important.

The major purpose of this activity is for students to become familiar with the components of a wetland habitat. In order to ensure wetland animal survival, sufficient food, oxygen, water, shelter, and space must be in a suitable balance.

Procedure:
1. Select one person and have that person come to the front. This person will be labeled "wetland" with a sign made from poster board or other paper. (Attach the sign to the student with tape or string.) Discuss the habitat components of the wetland (oxygen, food, water, shelter, and space in suitable proportions). What makes wetlands unique? Discuss the benefits of a wetland. Discuss different kinds of wetlands.

2. Identify some of the animals that depend upon wetlands and discuss why the wetlands are important to these animals. Refer to the Wetland Animal List at the end of this activity.

3. As each animal is selected and discussed, have one person come forward and put on the label of that animal. Have enough labels so everyone can become an animal living in the wetland.

4. Arrange the participants in a circle so that there is no drastic change in height from one person to the next.

5. Students should be standing shoulder to shoulder, facing the center of the circle.

6. Ask each participant to turn toward the right, at the same time taking one step toward the center of the circle. Participants should be standing close together, with each person looking at the back of the head of the person in front of him.

7. Ask everyone to listen carefully. Each participant should place his hands on the waist or shoulders of the person in front of him. At the count of three, everyone should sit down on the knees of the person behind him, keeping knees together to support the person in front. (You may want to have a practice or two before having them sit down completely.)

8. When they are seated, talk briefly about the dependence on each other that they all share. Stand beside "wetland" and ask what would happen if the wetland were destroyed or removed. Depending on the type of group, you might decide to pull "wetland" from the circle. The participants will immediately understand the effect on the populations in the wetland.

9. Discuss other things that could happen to the wetland that would change it but not necessarily destroy it (hurricanes, drought, fire, flood, pollution). Ask how the animals could survive or adapt to these changes.

Evaluation:
Ask the students to name the five essential components of a wetland habitat.

Ask the students to name five animals that depend on wetlands.

Which would have a greater long-term impact on the wildlife living in a wetland: a severe storm that floods and alters the wetland, or changing part of the wetland into a waterfront housing development?

Credit:
This activity is adapted from "Habitat Lap-Sit," **Project N.C. WILD.** Wetland Animal List adapted from David Curtis, Ranger, Goose Creek State Park, Washington, N.C.

BiT Extensions:

An alternate method of the lap sit activity focuses on the compenents of a habitat. Using the necklaces included with this activity, explain the importance and necessity of each of the habitat compenents (food, water, shelter, space and oxygen) to aquatic life. Have the students do the lap sit as described. Then pull out certain components from the circle to demonstrate their importance to the aquatic habitat.

Though not specific to wetlands, the cards from the "Aquatic Food Webs" extension activity can be used to do a lap sit such as the one detailed in this activity, which focuses on interrelatedness. Played this way, the lap sit activity best accompanies the BiT Guide activity "Water Webs."

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