



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge

GSA- JUNIORS (4th- 5th) ANIMAL HABITATS For spring 2012

Step 1. Learn about Wild Animals.

- Just as you are careful around pets, be even more careful when observing wild animals. Never feed or approach them; they may bite you.
- Wild animals may seem different from pets, but one time, all animals were wild.
- Wild Pets- Can be dangerous for everyone. Every state has laws about which wild animals or “exotic pets” people are allowed to keep. You will usually need special permission & special training to know how to keep you & the animal safe.

Step 2. Investigate Animal Habitat.

- Animal Control Officer- Makes sure people are taking care of animals responsibly. Example: If a dog is left outside without a shelter in very cold weather, an officer may come to investigate.
- A habitat contains many different animals. Think of it as a city in a wild kingdom.
- Explore an Animal Habitat (riparian forest). What do animals have in common? Make list of all features (fur, skin, paw, tail, coloring, kind of legs, mouth, ears). Circle the things the animals share. (Animal Classification). Trade ideas about why they have each feature (role of skin/fur, stay clean, move around, acquiring food).

Step 3. Create an Animal Home.

- Insulate your own Nest. Many animals use insulation to keep their homes cool in hot temperatures or warm in the cold. They may line their nest with feathers or human items (lint), or burrow into snow or mud to hold in body heat. Make a Jell-o Nest or similar experiment.

Step 4. Explore Endangered Habitats.

- Definition of Endangered Species & Endangered Species Act (Illegal to harm it).
- When animals no longer have their habitat, they have to adapt to a new place to live. Some animals can't change and end up becoming endangered.
- Example 1: Golden-cheeked Warbler lives only in cedar forests of the TX Hill Country/Black-capped Vireo. Why are they endangered?
What is happening to these birds?
What are people & the refuge doing to help their habitats?
Are these birds able to adapt?
- Example 2: Explore “cave habitat” structure. Learn about & Look for “cave animals” & learn about Cave Conservation.

Step 5. Protect Animal Habitats.

- Re-create an Oil Spill- Activity.
- Oil spills have devastated the Gulf of Mexico and the Arctic Circle.
- How do scientists clean oil spills?
- How can you help keep the oceans & beaches clean? (trash).