

# *Where's My Habitat*

## **GRADES**

1-5

## **TIME**

30-45 minutes

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students will identify a native Inland Northwest animal and place it in its respective habitat.

## **METHOD**

Students will embark on a guided fantasy that leads them through the four major habitat types of Turnbull NWR. Each student receives an animal that they are responsible for placing in its correct habitat according to what they saw and heard during the journey.

## **VOCABULARY**

*habitat, badger, marmot, grassland, wetland, kingfisher, mink, riparian zone, snag, northern flicker, forest*

## **MATERIALS**

pictures of 4 different habitats (alternate: felt board with 4 habitats on it); pictures or books that show the animals mentioned in the story; laminated animal cards

## **BACKGROUND**

For information on the four habitat types, refer to background section of Habitat Pen Pals.

## **PROCEDURE**

1. Lead a brief discussion describing habitat and the four types found in our area, using the habitat pictures to demonstrate. Ask the students to think about the time they have spent in these places. What did they see, smell, and hear there? What did they do there?
2. Pass out the animal cards, making sure that most kids have different animals. What animal do you have? If some of the animals are new to the children, then show pictures of them to the class and discuss their natural history a bit. Everyone must be clear on their animal because they need to know its name and its habitat to participate in the guided fantasy trip.
3. Now tell them that they are going on a trip through the four habitats that we talked about. Tell them that they are going to use their imaginations to go on this journey in their minds. This guided fantasy creates a firsthand learning experience that will evoke memories of past experiences and rev up excitement for outings to come (like when you come to visit Turnbull NWR)! While reading the fantasy, have the children:

- Assume a comfortable position (lie on their backs on the floor if possible)
- Close their eyes
- Relax
- Take a few slow, deep breaths
- Clear their minds so that they are ready to walk freely through their imagination with you

Have them visualize that they are in a quiet, safe place, or one that they love best, to help them relax. Separate any groups of students that tend to distract one another. Some children respond well to this sort of visualization, while others might be tempted to giggle or peek and poke at their neighbors. Stress the importance of absolute silence throughout so that those that are into the journey will not be disturbed. Incorporate any sound effects or music you think may enhance the experience. Make sure to pace your voice and change the volume and pitch to emphasize certain points and keep it surprising. Be dramatic!

4. Once the trip is over, leave a minute of silence and then bring them back quietly by asking everyone to return to their seat.
5. If they were listening very carefully, they learned what habitat their animal lives in. Have students come up in little groups and place their animal in its correct habitat on the board under the habitat pictures or on the felt board.
6. Are all the animals in the right habitats? Have the children correct any misplaced ones.
7. Mention that this walk in the outdoors was just a snapshot in time. What season was it? Do you think that all of the animals stay in these habitats all the time? Explore the implications together for the different animals present.

#### **WRAP-UP**

Knowing different habitats, being aware of when you are in them and what you might encounter there opens the door to learning more about these places and species when you visit them. This activity is about learning from direct observation. Knowing names gives people a sense of where to start learning more from the animal or plant itself. Ask the children if they have ever learned anything about animals or plants by watching them. Was this in a brief encounter or over a period of time? If they need prompts, bring up bird nest construction and chick rearing near their homes, watching a spider build its web or catching meals in it, following a set of tracks in mud or snow, etc. This activity can be a jumping-off activity for an assignment to record and report animal observations over a period of time that occur near their homes.

# *Where's My Habitat?*

As you step out-of-doors, you can see a wide-open area just up ahead. It looks like a grassy meadow that has never been mowed. The blue sky stretches out above you. Prairie ringlet **butterflies** float lazily on warm currents to visit wildflowers who turn their faces to the sun in scattered patches. The plants itch and tickle as they swish and sway to let you pass. Suddenly, out of the corner of your eye you catch some quick movement through the grass. You just catch a flash of the squat body and painted black and white face of a **badger**, before you see his short bushy tail disappearing into his underground den. Better be more careful, badgers are ferocious predators, and they don't like surprises! Now that the badger has been flushed to his den, some **Columbian ground squirrels** pop up and stand at the entrances to their burrows to get a better view of what is happening. All of these animals find habitat in a **grassland**.

Off in the distance you can see the sun glinting off the glassy, smooth surface of some open water. Grasses, rushes and cattails sprout up around the edges of the water. As you walk towards the water, you feel the warmth of the sun beating down on your head and body. Gradually, you feel something cool seep into your shoes. Looking down, you see that, yes, your feet are getting soaked! You hear a loud buzz, and catch a glimmer of neon green and bright blue. It's a **dragonfly** out patrolling for a mosquito meal! It swoops to land on a cattail. It's see-through wings shine in the sun. You reach out to touch it, but its multi-lensed eyes see you coming and it is already gone! A large, bluish-gray bird, with a long beak and legs that trail like the tail of a kite flies overhead. Its long, slender neck is pulled back into an S-shape, and it lets out a cranky call not unlike the noise a pterodactyl might make! The **great blue heron** circles and lands on the opposite edge of the water in the bulrushes. She wades through the water, pauses, and stands entirely still. You stand still too, until with a quick dip of her head, the heron plucks a small fish from the water. Up ahead, you spy several **ducks** paddling silently across the water. Some are dabbling for food below the surface with their behinds straight up, while others dive and disappear completely into the depths for a meal. As you creep closer for a better look, you realize that you are now up to your knees in water and decide to head back to dry land. All of these animals find habitat in a **wetland**.

You follow along up the stream that empties into the wetland. The sound of the moving water muffles the noise of your feet. Shadows thrown by the tangled branches of willows, aspen trees, chokecherry and red-osier dogwood paint a pattern of dappled sunlight on your skin. A steel-blue bird, with a large head for its body, is perched in a lower branch upstream. He has a white breast, long, pointed beak, and a Mohawk for a hairdo! As you come closer, the **kingfisher** flies away. As you stand watching his wings, a slender, furry little mammal with a sleek brown coat noses its way to the edge of the stream. Its long body ends in a tail tipped in black. It looks quickly up and down the banks and spies you. Your eyes meet for a moment before the **mink** darts back into the thick undergrowth. Splash, ker-plop! Watch where you're going, you nearly stepped on that **frog**! All of these animals find habitat in the **riparian zone**.

You turn away from the stream and push your way through the dogwood and willow. The branches catch at your clothes and scratch your arms and face. When you break free of the riparian zone, you find yourself surrounded by the tall trunks of evergreen pines. Your feet scuffle along the needle-covered ground. You stop to look up into the branches, and there, among them is a clump of needles, which is particularly dark and dense. You think you thought you saw it move?! Wait, it is slowly crawling its way through the branches. This prickly sharp mammal is looking for a cozy place to take a nap high in a ponderosa pine. This **porcupine** is in no hurry today! You strain your ears to hear the sounds her claws make against the bark of the tree. You move on, stepping over a dead log covered in lichens. Crack! A brittle twig gives way underfoot. A shadowy, grayish-brown dog with pointy ears and a bushy tail runs like a ghost along the outskirts of the trees at the sound of the dry wood breaking. It is disappeared before you can be sure you really saw it. **Coyotes** are very sneaky – especially during the day! Your eyes are drawn to a woodpecker-like silhouette on the side of a dead standing tree with no bark and hardly any branches. This bird is gray with a red moustache running back from his long, sharp beak. He moves along the snag, tapping for hidden insect morsels. But, he really doesn't like you watching him, so he flies off between the trees showing a large, white patch of feathers on his rump above his tail and calling in a high, loud, rapid voice *wik-wik-wik-wik!* You investigate below the snag and find an orangish-red shafted feather of the **northern flicker** who was just startled off. All of these animals find habitat in the **forest**.

Suddenly, the wind gusts up bringing the smells of pine pitch and wild roses through the trees. You look to the sky, and see a storm is brewing off in the distance. As the dark clouds gather overhead, deep peals of thunder rumble in your ears. Lightning throws bolts of white-hot energy from the heavy thunderheads. You dash towards home full of the excitement of your afternoon adventures!