



Who's in the habitat?

Curriculum Idea: A habitat is the environment or area where a living thing or community makes its home, providing food and shelter. Many plants and animals can share the same habitat.

Related Episodes: Shell, Moving On Up, Out On a Limb

Age Range: 5-6

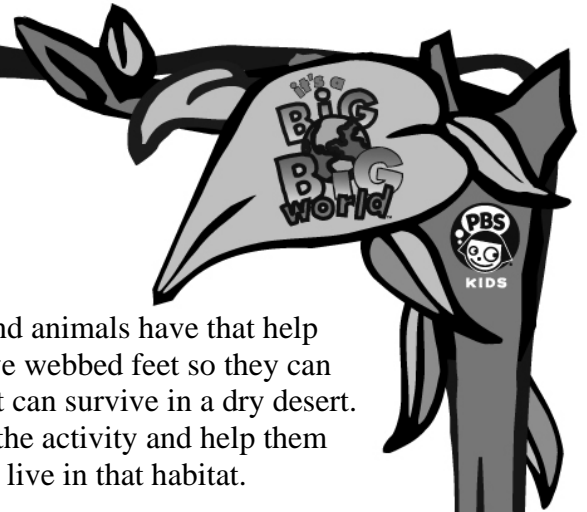
Subject: Biology

Skills: Critical thinking, comparison, classification, art

Materials: Paper plates, crayons/markers/pencils, 4 squares of paper, yarn/string, scissors/hole punch

Directions: Talk to your child about the idea of habitat. Stress the idea that a habitat is the environment or the surroundings where a living thing makes its home. A habitat might be a river, your garden, or a tree (like the World Tree). Just like your child has neighbors who live in the same area that he does, animals can also share their habitat with other plants and animals. Now tell him that you are going to make a habitat-mobile!

First, ask him to pick a habitat that he wants to draw a picture of. It could be a pond, a forest, a park near his house, or his own street. Have him draw a picture of the habitat on the inside of the paper plate (the side you would eat off of). Next, ask him what kind of living things (including plants and animals) live in the habitat. Are there trees, flowers, and bees? Or frogs, dragonflies, and cattails? You may need to help him differentiate between living and non-living things in the habitat. For example, a rock doesn't live in river, although there are rocks in a river habitat. You can also address the idea that a habitat can be a living thing, like a tree, or a nonliving thing, like a desert. Give him four squares of paper and have him draw pictures of different plants and animals that share the habitat he selected on the front and back of each sheet. Then, assemble the mobile by hanging his pictures from different points of the plate with string. Finally, punch a hole in the center of the plate and add a string that the mobile can be hung from.



Talk About It: Talk about the characteristics different plants and animals have that help them survive in the habitats they live in. For example, frogs have webbed feet so they can swim better in water. A cactus does not need a lot of water, so it can survive in a dry desert. Ask your child to look at the plants and animals that he drew in the activity and help them think of what sort of characteristics they have that allow them to live in that habitat.

Next, go through a list of other animals and ask him if each animal could survive in the habitat he drew. For example, would a polar bear who has a very thick coat of fur to keep warm be comfortable there? Or, could a fish that needs to be in water to breathe be able to survive in that habitat?

Take It Further: Observe places where there are different plants and animals sharing the same habitat. Go on a walk through your neighborhood and see what different kinds of plants and animals you see living together. Make a list as you walk. When you arrive home, talk about what similarities and differences there are between the things that live together. Or, visit a zoo or an aquarium and observe what plants and animals live together.

Contrast two very different types of habitats, for example, a pond and a desert. Research facts about these habitats and the plants and animals that live there and then discuss the special adaptations that they have to have for each habitat. For example, it is much hotter in a desert than at a pond and there is less water. So, how do the plants and animals that live in desert differ from those that live in the pond?