Quick & Easy Habitat Education Activities

Plant and Animal Interaction Hike

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Description: This activity connects the previous activities by asking students to use their observation skills to explore the relationship between animals and plants. Students learn to find wildlife sign, then to recognize how plants are being used by wildlife. Students use picture cards to help find and identify these wildlife and plant interactions. Closely follow this activity with Drawing for Reflection.

Objectives:
• Students learn that many types of wildlife use the plants in the habitat area to meet their survival needs.
• Students develop observation skills to identify evidence of wildlife in habitat areas.
• Students gain an understanding that animals are dependent on plants for habitat.

Materials:
• Images: ‘Plant and Animal Interactions’
• Master: ‘Evidence Card’

Kit Materials:
Laminated copies of ‘Evidence Card’: 1 per student or pair of students

Vocabulary
Interaction: a mutual or reciprocal action or influence
Observe: to watch carefully with attention to detail or behavior with the purpose of arriving at a judgment; to make a scientific observation on or of
Wildlife sign: evidence indicating the presence or existence of wildlife, traces of a usually wild animal

Before activity: Locate a trail in a habitat area that has evidence of wildlife using plants. Look for chew marks, nests, broken maple seeds or hazelnut shells, etc. (see Images: ‘Plant and Animal Interactions’ for additional examples). Divide the trail into one section for showing examples to students, and another where students can find their own examples.

Activity:
• Bring students to the entrance of a habitat area. Review knowledge about animals that live in Seattle urban habitat areas (or show image: ‘Seattle Habitat Wildlife’ poster from Plants & Animals: Same/Different activity).
• Ask students, “How do we know that there are animals in the forest?” State, “We can see the animals or see evidence of them. These are called signs. What are some signs that an animal has used a plant? (a piece of wood with holes in it, a leaf with chew holes in it) Here are some more examples.” Show images: ‘Wildlife Sign’. Ask, “Why might an animal need a plant to live (food, shelter)? What are some signs that an animal has used a plant (hole in a leaf, hole in a tree trunk, egg case on a leaf)?” State that, “Learning to notice how animals use plants helps us understand the importance of plants in habitat areas”.
• Say, “We are going to look for some evidence of plant and animal interactions in the habitat area.” Show Images: ‘Plant and Animal Interactions’ while showing similar, actual examples from the habitat area. Walk the first half of the trail looking as a group for different types of signs. Point out as many examples of wildlife evidence as possible.
• Tell students that they will look for their own signs of animal and plant interactions. Give each student (or pair of students) an ‘Evidence Card’. Tell students that these cards are intended to help remind them of types of evidence to look for, but they may find other signs. As students hike together through the second section of trail, have them look for signs or evidence of wildlife.
• Periodically, as students find signs, they can share their discoveries. Discuss each sign found using questions such as: “What is this sign evidence of? How do you imagine the animal was using the plant and why? What animal might have made the sign? What other evidence of that animal can you find nearby?”
• Summarize with students: “What are some of the things that we have seen today that show ways that animals need plants? How do plants help the animals (shelter, food, water)? Plants also need animals. Do you know any ways in which plants need animals?” (Squirrels help spread seeds, butterflies and bees pollinate, birds eat insects that eat plants.)

Extension:
• Humans are animals too. How do we use plants? (food, shelter, clothing, medicine, etc.). Discuss and share knowledge.