



Brightwater Site

Habitat Time - Program Outline

Background & Objectives

'Habitat Time' is an interpretive program of approximately 60 - 70 minutes, delivered at Brightwater Science & Environmental Centre for groups of 8-15 students in Grades 5 to 8.

Possible Theme statements

'Variety is the spice of life and wildlife habitat has lots of variety.'

'You need the same elements of habitat that wildlife needs but there is lots of variety in the elements.'

'Wildlife habitat is what an animal needs every day to survive.'

Students will have the opportunity to:

- identify the four elements of wildlife habitat (food, water, shelter, space in a suitable arrangement)
- relate these elements to species found at Brightwater (particularly birds and mammals)
- explore with all senses examples of some microhabitats used by wildlife species (particularly birds and mammals)
- experience through a simulation wide-game how changes in habitat affect wildlife

Materials

1. **Hog Call/Noah's Ark/Locate A Mate** (different name for same activity) – pairs of cards with names and drawings or photos of birds and mammals common to Brightwater along with suggestions for the sounds students can make to represent the species.

2. Card or puzzle pieces to represent the elements of habitat. (food, water, shelter, space in a suitable arrangement)

3. Carry props or specimens to represent selected wildlife species such as rubber tracks, beaver-chewed stick skulls and bones, owl pellets, scat, etc. Or scout the site or trail and know exactly where some naturally occurring examples are to be found and used on the day.

4. **Quick Frozen Critters** equipment including: 4 - 6 pylons, 6 – 10 hula hoops, 30 – 40 metal tokens.

Welcome & Introduction

After welcoming the students and having them introduce themselves, the facilitator leads a team 'huddle' (earth, fire water, air team etc.) with the group and reminds them of the Brightwater goal of Respect for Environment, Others and Self. This restatement from the project leader's overall introduction helps to refocus the children and lets them know that you as facilitator have certain expectations of their behavior.

For this program outline I've provided a few linking narratives for the facilitator to use themselves or use as seeds to grow their own narrative for the program.

This type of leadership helps students keep reconnecting the activities with the topic and theme. Use one of the theme statements provided above or develop your own. It has been shown that thematic presentations are more effective than general presentations. Presentations whose parts are united by the facilitator as the program develops are more effective.

From the gathering area lead students away from the buildings as short distance to a more 'natural setting' even if it just 100m. This relocation does wonders for having the group feel like 'something is about to happen'.

"Variety is the spice of life. There is good variety of wildlife at Brightwater and every wildlife species needs a particular set of conditions to survive. We call those conditions 'habitat'. What do you need every day to survive? What are parts of your 'habitat'."

Lead with these types of questions to get students thinking and providing ideas about their daily requirements. Help them to group these into the categories of food, water, shelter, and space in a suitable arrangement. You may want to bring along cue cards or a puzzle disc with the four elements of habitat written on them and pull out the cards or puzzle pieces from your pocket as the students mention them.

Activity One – Hog Call/Noah's Ark/Locate A Mate (various names for the same activity from Project Wild see page for description)

Be sure to mention that wildlife includes plants, invertebrates, fungi and many others in addition to birds and mammals but these last two groups are the ones, which the **Habitat Time** is going to work with.

All the species cards are wildlife found at Brightwater. Coach those students who are not sure how to make a particular call.

Immediately follow up on this activity by selecting one species from the group and details its use of sound and how this relates to habitat. The ruffed grouse is a good example.

The male grouse 'drums' during its mating period by rapidly flapping its wings at its side, progressively faster than slowing down, to create a deep pitched rush of air. The wings do not actually beat on the sides of the bird or on the ground. The drumming is done from a fallen log or other slightly elevated spot. Thus, bird requires habitat (shelter) which will provide a slightly open space for the bird to interact with a female but not too wide open to betray its location visually to predators. The grouse is still and camouflaged between drummings so the habitat also provides space and shelter in this respect.

Ask students which may not have had nor found a mate how they feel. Solicitation of thoughtful expressions of feelings related to nature and wildlife is something that may not be done often enough. It has its value when the responses are considerably received by the facilitator and other group members.

See Project Wild pages 206-207 for a brief background discussion of habitat.

Activity Two – Habitat Lap Sit (Project Wild page 28)

Link Activity One with this activity by introducing the concept of the pieces of the habitat having to be connected to actually support a bird or mammal.

In addition to the instruction for the Project Wild **Habitat Lap Sit** have each student 'sound off' in a circle before beginning to identify which component of habitat they represent in the lap sit circle. This reinforces the recall of the components.

Activity Three

It's time to move the group again to another natural site. Walk 50 - 200 meters down a trail. It's best to find an activity site with some widening on the trail or viewpoint, perhaps on the footbridge or hillside. Before the group moves instruct them to be very quiet and start looking and listening for wildlife or signs of wildlife in the Brightwater habitats.

You should have pre-scouted this location and made mental notes on two or three specific examples of wildlife and how the students may relate them directly to the habitat as they inspect the site. Directed questioning will help them explore.

One option is to use the four habitat cue cards/puzzle pieces and divide the group into smaller work groups. Separate them by 15 – 20 meters so they are not distracted by each other and task them to look over the site and find detailed examples of a habitat component being present for a particular species.

For instance, if the beaver was the subject, look through the creekside and point out directly a habitat item. (lodge =shelter, aspen, willow = shelter and food, water flow of creek = shelter and space and so on)

Do this for two species if time allows. Always look for and hope that the bird or animal or its tracks or sign which might be present. Bring rubber paw and hoof casts or other props to pass among the group and keep attention focussed on the species and its habitat.

Summarize with comments and questions to help students draw the adaptations to habitats together. Restate the theme and ask students to provide examples to support the theme.

For instance, ask, “What might happen to the animal if one of these essentials is altered or removed?” or “What if the variety of the habitats was destroyed?”

Activity Four

Change site for the last time, moving to a wide game area.

Play **Quick Frozen Critters** from Project Wild p.147. This game allows for interesting modifications to habitat within the game and clearer outcomes as the results of the modifications.

Wrap-Up

Conclude by asking some questions about how human activities can alter wildlife habitat.

Ask how people negatively alter their own habitat. Ask how thing might be made better for wildlife habitat and people. Make a final connection once again to your theme statement.

Evaluation

As part of the wrap-up, ask a few students what they are going to tell their parents or friends that they did during the **Habitat Time**. They should be able to express or paraphrase the theme in active terms.