Habitats

What is Ecology?

Overview

This component introduces students to the study of habitats as the science of ecology. The students will be invited to be **'Junior Ecologists.'** Children are naturally fascinated by living things and will take a keen interest in a study of plant and animal habitats. The book will be more meaningful to the students if live specimens are made available. This can be done easily by setting up one or more simple habitats in the classroom. The type of habitat and the choice of contents will make little difference to students. Many simple habitats can be set up with just a few simple materials and easily obtainable specimens. Students will enjoy and be very helpful in setting up habitats by finding the contents and maintaining them. Before setting up habitats, the students should understand that it is their responsibility as junior ecologists, to remove specimens carefully, to ensure that they are taken care of and to return them to their natural habitat at the end of the study. (See Setting Up Habitats)

Learning Expectations

Students will:

1. Understand that the information we have and continue to gain about plants and animals, their relationships to one another and their roles in the environment are due to the science of ecology.
2. Understand that the study of ecology is important to an understanding of environmental problems and possible solutions to those problems.
3. Understand that scientists gain information through observation and experimentation.
4. Have an understanding of the purpose of the activities to follow and approach them like young scientists.

Planning Ahead

1. Think about whether you will set up (a) simple habitat(s) ahead of time or make one with the assistance of the students. The students could help during the introductory lesson. (See Setting Up Classroom Habitats)
2. Gather interesting pictures, books, specimens and facts about plants and animals.
3. Locate a film, video or filmstrip about ecology.
4. Think about inviting an ecologist into the classroom to speak with the students.
5. Plan for the storage of student work, i.e. duo-tangs, folders etc. If making folders, the activity could be incorporated into the introductory lesson.
6. Make a chart of the vocabulary and post it in the room.
7. Find interesting facts about plants and animals that will spark interest.
8. Duplicate the student pages and make booklets.

OTM-2104 ISBN: 9781550356298

Habitats

Implementation Suggestions

1. Use a display of interesting pictures and facts about plants and animals or the 'What is Ecology' information card as a springboard. Discuss how knowledge about plants and animals is collected and discuss its importance.

2. Discuss the term ecology and explain that an ecologist is a person who studies the relationships between plants and animals by studying natural habitats.

3. Invite the students to be junior ecologists, by introducing them to the mini-habitat in the classroom or discussing mini-habitats that they might set up on their own at home or cooperatively in the classroom. (See Habitats, by Pamela Hickman, for a wide variety of ideas) Explain that students will be responsible for observing and maintaining the habitat.

4. Allow the students time to look at and discuss the books and other materials in the classroom.

5. Cooperatively prepare a list of guidelines for obtaining materials for habitats, e.g. no trespassing, digging up full plant including root, checking conditions where found, etc.

6. Prepare a chart of rules for handling contents of mini-habitats, i.e. rules about washing hands after handling any material in the habitats and only handling, smelling or touching at appropriate times.

Resources

Cochrane, Jennifer, Plant Ecology; Wayland Publishers Ltd., London, ©1987
Cochrane, Jennifer, Urban Ecology; Wayland Publishers Ltd., London, ©1987
Hickman, Pamela, Habitats; Kids Can Press Ltd., Toronto, ©1993
MacDonald Educational Ltd., Exploring Ecology; Morrison and Gibb Ltd., London, ©1978
Pringle, Laurence, Discovering Nature Indoors, Doubleday And Company, Inc., ©1970
Twist, Clint, The Wayland Library of Science and Technology, Plants and Animals; Wayland Publishers, England, ©1990
Twist, Clint, The Wayland Library of Science and Technology, The Environment; Wayland Publishers, England, ©1990
Vancleave, Janice, Plants, John Wiley and Sons Inc., ©1997