

A DAY BY THE BUFFALO

RESOURCE DIVERSITY – Indian Rockhouse Hike

The vast diversity of natural resources of the Buffalo River valley has attracted people for thousands of years. The Ozarks is a biological crossroads, exhibiting species from east and west, north and south, many unexpectedly found in association with other species. This biodiversity provided for the needs of the people that lived in this region.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

The **Ozark** region is home to many different types of plants and animals, with *species* that range throughout the United States. This is due, in part, to its central location. To the east of the Ozarks are the forests of the Appalachian Mountains -- to the west range the wide open plains, deserts of the Southwest, and the high mountain peaks of the Rockies. The Ozark region is considered to be at the *biological crossroads* of the United States.

Because of this *biodiversity*, people have been attracted to this area as a source of resources for many years. Indians traveled through the area thousands of years ago, following large animals for food and clothing. Later, bluff dwelling people created more permanent communities, seeking shelter in large overhangs and caverns. As recent as the early 1800s, Cherokee Indians settled in and farmed the fields along the riverbanks. Today we continue to create homes and communities in these same hills and hollows.

Each group has left their mark on the land. *Prehistoric* Indians used stone for weapons and tools, clay for pottery, and plants for medicines, dyes, and food. They traveled down the rivers and along narrow trails through the woods, following the paths created by wildlife. Today, their *artifacts* are found on the landscape. They left little mark upon the land by today's standards.

By the 1830s, settlers from the east began widening woodland paths for wagons. The rugged hills and hollows, however, made the Ozarks a difficult area to *settle*. Steep hillsides, rocky slopes, and thinly soiled hilltops made farming difficult except in fields along the rivers. Water had to be carried great distances from springs or collected in cisterns. Wells were difficult to dig and sometimes unreliable due to caves and sinkholes.

Eventually, however, fields were cleared for farming and trees were cut for homes and to sell for lumber. Settlers mined the rock for lead and zinc. Wild plants and animals continued to provide food, clothing, and even medication.



Today the paths are even wider. Campers and tractor-trailer trucks follow a roadway that may have originally been established by a deer. Indoor plumbing, wells, cellular phones and computers have enabled us to settle areas once difficult to inhabit. We rely less on wild plants and animals and more on grocery stores and farm raised animals and vegetables. Roads penetrate much deeper into the woods.

National parks are places where we have touched the land, but only lightly. They give us an idea of how an area may have appeared during the time when only paths ran through the woods. They provide protection for plants that may have medicinal uses yet to be discovered. National parks give us a place to remember.

CLASSROOM: PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

Activity 1. The Land Provides

STATE STANDARD

Social Studies - Strand : Geography

Standard 3. Interaction of People and the Environment

Students shall develop an understanding of the interactions between people and their environment.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. list three plants that were utilized (or may still be) by people that lived in this area. Consider prehistoric and modern uses.
2. diagram the influences of the bioregions that surround the Ozarks.
3. list three species of plants or animals or a combination that are found in the Ozarks but ordinarily are found in abundance in a different bioregion.

MATERIALS

- paper
- pencils
- map of the United States

ACTIVITY

1. As a group activity, identify the biological regions that surround the Ozarks on a map of the United States. Visually represent the Ozarks as a biological crossroads, exhibiting species from other areas.
2. Have students research plants of the Ozarks and list ones that were used for medicine. Have them list other resources that were used to support life in this area. Include any resources that were used for industry. How has the utilization of these resources impacted the area, economically or in distribution, population, or diversity?
3. Discuss with the students ways we affect the land today. Do these things have a positive or negative affect on the environment? If negative, what are ways to do these things and have the least impact?



NATIONAL RIVER: ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

Activity 2. Indian Rockhouse Hike

STATE STANDARD

Social Studies - Strand : Geography

Standard 3. Interaction of People and the Environment

Students shall develop an understanding of the interactions between people and their environment.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. describe why the Ozarks is known as a ***biological crossroads***.
2. explain why the Buffalo River valley has attracted prehistoric, historic, and contemporary settlement.
3. identify one or more plant species used for 1) medicine, 2) food, and 3) resources.
4. identify one or more animal species used as food and for resources.
5. identify major geological features, emphasizing cultural connections
6. describe two industrial uses of the resources
7. explain how industry and settlement have affected the land.
8. describe ways we can have a positive affect upon the land.
9. describe the purpose of national parks in preserving the areas.

MATERIALS

- day pack
- drinking water

ACTIVITY

Be prepared to spend approximately three and a half to four hours with a park ranger hiking a moderate difficulty trail to the Indian Rockhouse bluff shelter.

CLASSROOM: POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Activity 3. A Way of Life

STATE STANDARD

Social Studies - Strand : Geography

Standard 3. Interaction of People and the Environment

Students shall develop an understanding of the interactions between people and their environment.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- identify three cultures that lived in the Buffalo River Valley and the affect each group had on the land.

MATERIALS

- pencil
- paper

ACTIVITY

1. Divide the students into three groups. Have one group research prehistoric Indians, the second group research historic Indians, and the third group research pioneers/ settlers/ miners of the Buffalo River Valley. Some questions to research include:
 - a. Why were they attracted to the Buffalo River Valley?
 - b. Where did they live and why?
 - c. What kind of natural resources did they use and why?
 - d. What were some major geological features of the Buffalo River Valley that both helped and hindered settlement here?
 - e. Was finding/growing food difficult or easy? Why?
 - f. How did they change the land?
2. After the students have researched the three groups, compare and contrast the three cultures.
 - a. Which culture did the least or the most damage to the environment?
 - b. Why is it important to preserve our environment now?
 - c. Why is it important to have areas like the Buffalo National River?



KEY WORDS

species, biological crossroads, biodiversity, prehistoric, artifacts, settle, national parks, Ozarks

RESOURCES

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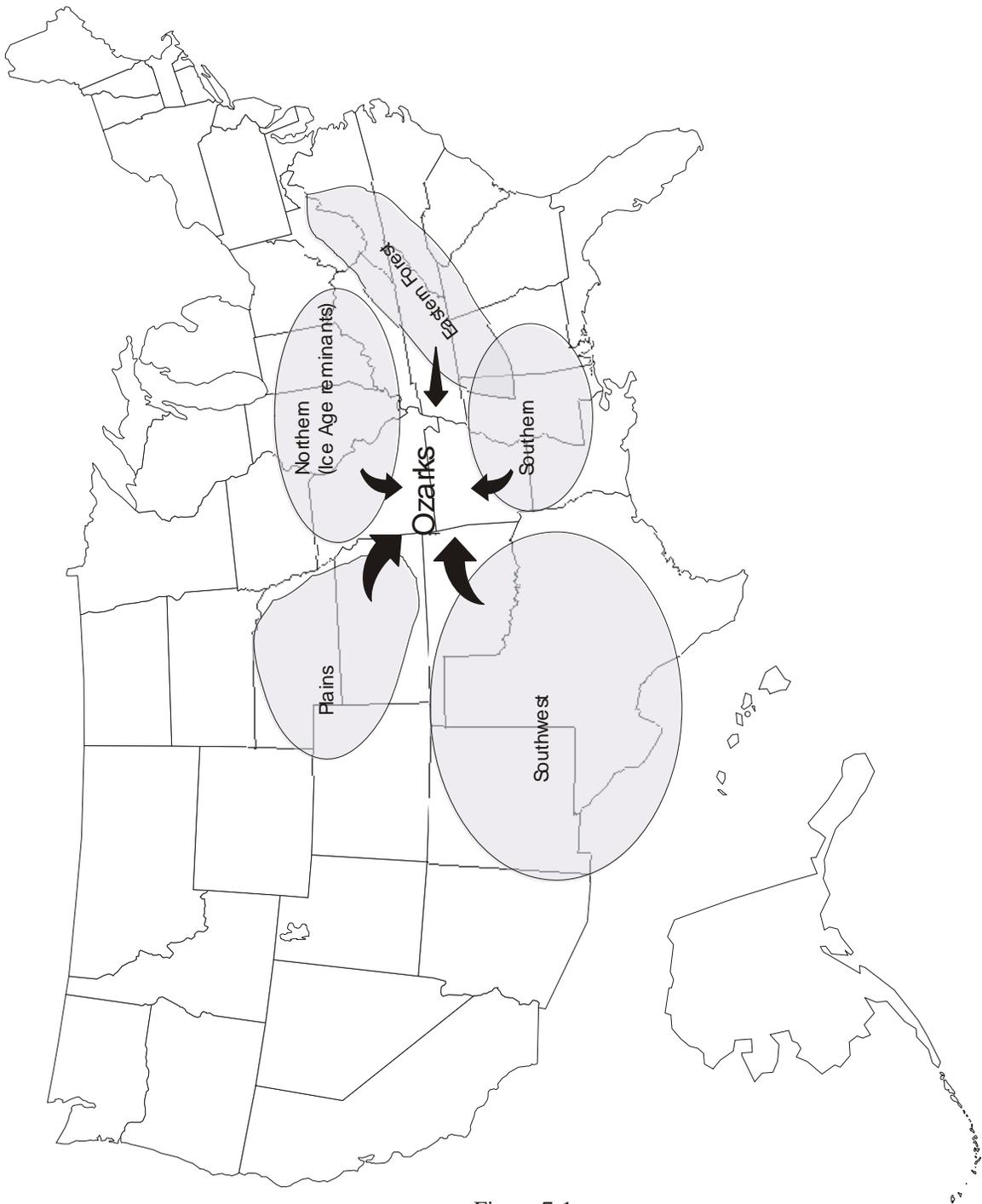


Figure 7-1