

Hurry for a Habitat

Subject: Science, Physical Education

Duration: 45 minutes

Location: Outdoors

Key Vocabulary: Pinelands, hardwood hammock, cypress slough, sawgrass prairie, bayhead, sea grass bed, coral reef

Related Activities: Habitat Hunt; Riddles-Guess the Organism; Create A Community; Habitat Hold-Up

Florida Sunshine State Standards: SC.4.L.17, SC.5.L.17, SC.6.L.14



Objectives: After this activity, the students will be able to:
a) name and describe at least four Everglades/South Florida habitats, b) name two animals that live in each habitat, and c) identify what causes habitats to be different.

Method: Using a relay race activity, the students will become familiar with the different habitats of the Everglades and South Florida, and the flora and fauna found in each one.

Background: South Florida and the Kissimmee River Basin can be seen as one ecosystem (or a very broad habitat). Within this South Florida ecosystem is a collection of habitat types. This activity will develop the students' knowledge of the differences between the habitat types, as well as the different organisms that live in each one. The random formation of the limestone foundation of the Everglades determines where a certain habitat will be found. Therefore, pockets and islands of the different habitats are scattered throughout. The water level and water availability determine the vegetation of a particular habitat, and this in turn determines the wildlife found there. See the "Natural History" section for more information about South Florida's habitats.

Materials

- 4 boxes, bags, or crates
- South Florida animal & plant cards (one made by each student) from the black and white animal outlines found in the "Supplementary Materials" section, or from other sources.

Suggested Procedure

1. Place at least four containers (boxes, bags, or crates) marked with different habitats of South Florida in a line with labels facing the group. The containers should be clearly marked, but also creatively decorated.
2. Divide the group in half, and line up each group in single file. The lines should be next to each other with the leader facing the habitat boxes (relay race-style).
3. Between the students and the boxes, place a stack of (or scatter) cards with plants and animals that are found in the habitats represented.
4. The first student in each line will, upon signal, run to the cards, pick one up, and place it in its appropriate habitat (corresponding box). The student then runs back to his/her line and tags the next person who will run and select another card. This continues until each student in both groups has placed a card in a box.
5. Once the groups are finished, review the contents of each of the habitat boxes.

6. Discuss why certain organisms cannot survive in a particular habitat (wrongly placed cards); conclude with differences of plants and animals in each.
* Note: you can either use this with a bit of friendly competition (naming the teams and marking each stack of cards), or you can keep it anonymous and focus on the concept.

Evaluation

Discuss the following questions with the students: Do some animals depend on more than one habitat? Are all the different habitats necessary? Why do certain plants and animals need a particular habitat? What makes the habitats different (i.e. elevation, water levels, vegetation, etc...)?

Extension

Have the students choose their favorite habitat, describe it, and research it. Find out what kind of plants it has, what animals live there and what special characteristics it has. Also, why is it important to the South Florida ecosystem?

