

Habitats

READ ALOUD PASSAGE

Every animal has the same four basic needs wherever it lives: enough food of the right kind, a reliable source of water, a safe place for shelter and raising young, and a climate that is not too extreme. Together, these requirements are what scientists mean by an animal's habitat.

The specifics of those four needs can look completely different from animal to animal. A beaver needs a flowing stream or a pond, while a kangaroo rat living in the desert can go its whole life without any open water at all. A tree squirrel needs trees to nest in, while a ground squirrel digs a burrow instead and never climbs anything. Even though the four basic needs are the same for every animal, exactly how each need gets met depends on the species.

Plants have their own version of these requirements, though scientists usually call it an environment rather than a habitat. A plant's environment includes how much moisture it needs, how much sunlight it gets, what kind of soil it grows in, and what climate it can tolerate. Different plants have wildly different tolerances for each of these factors, which is why you will not find the same plants growing in a rainforest and a desert.

Habitats do not stay the same forever. Floods, fires, droughts, and people clearing land for farms or neighborhoods can all change a habitat quickly. When that happens, animals that depended on the old habitat may move somewhere else if a suitable one is nearby, but many cannot find a new home in time.

Humans are unusual because instead of only searching for a place that already meets our needs, we can change our surroundings to meet them. We build houses and use heating and cooling to control the temperature inside. We grow food in one place and ship it wherever people live. A handful of other animals do something similar on a much smaller scale, like beavers damming a stream or birds building a nest, but no other species reshapes its surroundings the way humans do.

Activity 1: Word Hunt

Look back at the reading. Find four nouns and write them on the lines.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Activity 2: Statement or Question?

Read each sentence. Write S if it is a statement or Q if it is a question. Then add the correct end mark on the line.

- ☐ 1. What four things does every animal need ____
- ☐ 2. A kangaroo rat can live without open water ____
- ☐ 3. Can people change their surroundings ____
- ☐ 4. Fires and floods can change a habitat ____

Activity 3: Sentence Scramble

These words are mixed up. Put them in order to make a sentence. Start with a capital letter and end with a period.

1. animal / needs / and / food / every / water

2. a / beaver / a / builds / dam

3. change / habitat / a / fires / can
