



Ecosystem Activity

This activity is designed to get students thinking about ecosystems and how organisms interact with each other and the environment around them. Read through the directions before you begin. Internet resources such as a website for a nearby zoo are a good place to start.

Always ask a parent or guardian for permission before using internet resources!

1. Draw a picture of your favorite animal.
2. Where does it live? Add that to the picture.
 - a. How has it adapted to that climate?
 - i. Does it have warm fur, or no fur?
 - ii. Does it use a shelter, such as a den or burrow?
3. What does it eat? Add some food to the drawing.
 - a. Plants or meat?
 - i. A plant eater is called an herbivore, a meat eater is called a carnivore, and an animal that eats both is called an omnivore. What category do you belong to?
4. How does it avoid predators?
 - a. Does it run?
 - b. Is it big?
 - c. Does it have armor?
 - d. Is it poisonous or venomous?
 - i. Poison is used for defense (being bitten), venom is used for offense (doing the biting) or to get prey.
 - e. Does it camouflage?
5. What is another animal that your favorite animal lives with? For example, prairie dogs and bison often live close together. Add that animal to the picture.
 - a. How has it adapted to the environment around it?
 - b. What does it eat?
 - c. How does it avoid being eaten?

All of these questions describe how an animal exists in an ecosystem. An ecosystem is all the living and non-living aspects of an area. An ecosystem can be big, like the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. It can also be small, like a fallen log in a forest. Some organisms are what we call “keystone species”. This means they are necessary for the survival of many other organisms in their ecosystem. An example of a keystone species would be wolves in the Yellowstone ecosystem.

Discussion Questions

1. Would you say your animal is a keystone species? Why or why not?
2. What other organisms that share an ecosystem with your animal could be considered a keystone species?
3. How do you think paleontologists figure out how extinct animals interacted?