

Home Is Not Just a House

*This activity is adapted from an idea in the Project WILD elementary manual.

INTRODUCTION

Every living animal requires habitat. Simply defined, a habitat equals food, water, shelter and space in the proper arrangement. Humans, no less than wildlife, require the habitat essentials; and like other species we seek a comfortable, resource-rich space to meet our requirements.

Identifying that we share similar needs with wildlife helps build the concept that the wise use of resources benefits us directly and indirectly.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Identify and classify food, water, shelter and space as the four components of habitat. (Food, water and shelter are fairly self-explanatory. For this activity, space is the home range of the animal in which it can acquire the other three components.)
- 2) Identify and visualize the four habitat components in the students' own lives.
- 3) Identify the four habitat components for jaguars in a forest.
- 4) Using white-tailed deer as the jaguar's food component, link human, deer and jaguar needs.

MATERIALS

Drawing paper, crayons, photos (or drawings) of jaguar and human habitat, blackboard and chalk

ACTIVITY

A] Habitat for People

- 1) Ask each student to draw a picture of where he or she lives. Be sure they include in their drawings all the things they need to live there (examples: a place to sleep, a place to eat, a bathroom).
- 2) After the drawings are completed, discuss them with the students. Ask them to point out the things they need to live there. What did they include? Why do they need those things?
- 3) Guide them to identify, classify and understand the things they drew as habitat components by displaying the students' drawings. Then ask each student to point out the food, water, shelter and space in his or her home.

B] Habitat for Wildlife

- 1) Ask students to close their eyes and imagine a jaguar's home. What does a jaguar need to live in the forest? Remind students of the things in their homes. Does a jaguar need food, water, shelter and space, too?
- 2) Ask students to describe the parts of a jaguar's home that they imagined.
- 3) Now guide them to identify food, water, shelter and space for jaguar in a picture of its habitat. Were the parts of habitat in the picture the same as what they imagined?

C] Chart the Results

- 1) On the blackboard, make a chart like the table below.
- 2) In words or pictures make a list of all the things students can think of that are found in a forest. Do not rely solely on photographs supplied with this activity. Many habitat components may not be visible at first glance.
- 3) Work through the list, making a check mark next to those things that could be components of habitat for people. (Remember that people can alter the resources to create those components.)
- 4) Now work through the list again, this time checking the things that can be habitat components for jaguars.
- 5) How many of the habitat components are the same for both people and jaguars? Why?

People	Things in a Forest	Jaguars
	1. dirt	
	2. trees	
	3. deer	
	4. streams	
	etc.	

WRAP-UP

Compare and discuss the pictures that the students drew of their homes with the picture of jaguar habitat. Why are some things different? Why are some things the same? Do people and jaguars share needs for the exact same things sometimes? Jaguars need the forest as habitat for their food and as shelter. Among other things, people need the forest to provide wood to *build* their shelter. Is it possible that people use water from the same river that the jaguar needs? Do some kinds of food for people come from the same forest? Suggest some possibilities for ways that jaguars and humans use the same space.

Finally, consider and discuss the idea that using our homes wisely helps preserve the jaguar's home; and that protecting the jaguar's home can help protect our own homes.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Ask students to look at the photographs in the file Habitat Photos. Some are obviously of places where people live. Others seem to be where only jaguars would live. In several of the locations, both people and jaguars live. Can your students point out or imagine the four habitat components for jaguars and/or people in these places?