

Trail Trekkers

GENERAL INFORMATION

OBJECTIVES

Students will become naturalists and investigate for signs of life and interactions among living things along a trail.

QUESTIONS

How do plants help animals? How do animals help plants? How do animals help each other? How do living things interact with their environment? What is a consumer? What is a producer?

VOCABULARY

Interact, producer, consumer, environment, ecosystem

ACTIVITY MATERIALS

Eye loupes, collection jars or trays, Scavenger Hunt sheets, clipboards, pencils

METHODS

INTRODUCTION

Gather the students together and have them sit on the ground. Ask: **In what ways do plants help animals** (plants can provide food and shelter for animals)? Give the example of a caterpillar eating the leaves of a plant and a bird using twigs to make a nest. **What are some ways that animals help plants?** Explain that animals can move the seeds of a plant to a new location so the seeds can grow. Give the example of seeds sticking to the fur of a rabbit. **How do animals help each other?** Explain that animals can provide food for other animals. Give the example of a spider eating a beetle stuck in its web. Discuss that these are some of the ways that animals and plants interact with each other.

Explain that living things can get food two different ways: (1) Making it themselves, termed producers and (2) eating plants and other animals, termed consumers. Ask: **What is an example of a producer** (plants)? **What is an example of a consumer** (animals)? Explain that living things can also interact with the environment around them. Ask: **How do you think living things can change their ecosystem** (too many animals in an ecosystem can damage other plants and animals)? Give the example of too many deer eating all of the young trees growing. This affects the rest of the animals in the ecosystem that depend on the trees for food.

Teacher's Corner

Grade Level(s)

2nd, 3rd, and 4th

Grade Level Expectations

GLE 0207

- Inq.1: Observe the world of familiar objects using the senses and tools.
- Inq.3: Explain the data from an investigation.
- 2.1: Investigate the habitats of different kinds of local plants and animals.
- 2.3: Identify basic ways that plants and animals depend on each other.
- 3.1: Recognize that animals eat plants or other animals for food.

State Performance Indicators

SPI 0307

- 2.2: Determine how plants and animals compete for resources such as food, space, water, air, and shelter.
- 3.2: Recognize that animals obtain their food by eating plants and other animals.

SPI 0407

- 2.1: Recognize the impact of predation and competition on an ecosystem.
- 3.1: Determine how different organisms function in terms of their location on an energy pyramid.

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ACTIVITY

Break the group up into teams of two or three. Distribute the “Scavenger Hunt” sheets, eye loupes, clip boards, and pencils among the teams of students. Instruct students to look for interactions between animals and animals, plants and plants, and plants and animals. Some of the things they might look for include butterflies sipping nectar from flowers, spiders using twigs to support their webs, fungi growing on trees, bug chewings, insects in spider’s web, etc. Allow students 20-30 minutes to complete their “Scavenger Hunt” sheets. When done, gather together again as a group and form a seated circle. Go over the scavenger hunt sheet as a group and have students stand or raise their hands to indicate which items they found. Ask: **Did anyone see any interactions here that they have also seen at home or at school? What are some interactions that we did not find today?** Going through the examples students have found, ask them: **Is this a producer or consumer?**

DISCUSSION

Review the following points: How do plants and animals interact with each other? Why is it important to understand these interactions? What role do people play in nature? What is a producer? What is a consumer? How do plants and animals affect their ecosystem?

WRAP-UP

Allow students to replace anything collected. Collect the “Scavenger Hunt” sheets.

BRINGING IT TO THE CLASSROOM

Using the data sheets, collect pictures online of some of the animals found from the activity. Begin a discussion about the different types of consumers. Showing students the pictures, ask them to identify which are carnivores, herbivores, omnivores, or decomposers. Encourage them to think about themselves. What type of consumer are they? For older kids, discuss the idea of the food chain and have them map out a food chain using the pictures collected.

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