



Teacher Resource Sheets

Activity Time:

60 minutes

Setting:

Open space outdoors, gym or cleared area in classroom

Method:

Students classify pictures of native and non-native animals and plants.

Materials:

- Pictures or species cards of native and non-native plants and animals
- Poster board or somewhere to post the pictures
- Glue (if required).

Grade Level:

K - Grade 3

Subject Areas:

Science, Physical Education

Skills:

Classification, observation

Group Size:

Any

Vocabulary:

native, non-native, ecosystem, evolve

What's Native?

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Distinguish between native and non-native species; and
2. Recognize that there are many different types of plants.

Background

A native species is one that naturally occurs in an area. A native plant, for example, is a plant that has lived and evolved in a certain place for a long time (i.e. thousands of years) and is part of the natural ecosystem. Native species have co-evolved with other competing species, predators, diseases, climate factors and other aspects of a region and an ecosystem. Native plants are part of a natural balance and a natural system and provide important food and shelter for wildlife.

Non-native or alien species are those that do not naturally occur in an area and were likely brought to a place by humans, either accidentally or intentionally. A non-native species has not evolved as part of the native ecosystem and does not have the same balance and place in the ecosystem. Some non-native species are called invasive because they are able to spread and dominate or push out native species.

This concept might be confusing because we are often surrounded by so many gardens in urban areas with wide varieties of exotic plants.

The Activity

1. Assemble a collection of pictures or species cards of native and non-native plants and animals. If you are gathering pictures, students can help search and cut them out or bring pictures from home. (Tip: try printing from the internet.)

2. Discuss the meanings of native and non-native species and use examples (if the students are younger, use more extreme examples) of animals they know such as elephants and tigers vs deer and cougar. Which animals belong here? Introduce the concept of native plants with similar examples that they might immediately recognize.

3. Classify the pictures or species cards in your collection – either as a whole group or in smaller groups. Create collages, posters or a bulletin board of collections of native and non-native species. You may want to create separate collections for plants and animals or just focus on plants.

Extension

Optional: play the **Web of Life** game to show how plants are part of an ecosystem and everything is interdependent/ interrelated.

Visit some habitats where these plants are found

- Take the species cards on your field trip and try to match the cards with the real plants
- Find non-native species that don't belong



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