

Plant and Animal Habitats

There are many plant and animal habitats (homes) in the Arboretum



Age: All

Time: 45 minutes

Every habitat has different light, water, and plants. Different animals live in different habitats. Observe habitats in Lake Wilderness Arboretum and observe how they are different or similar.

Here's How:

Visit two or more of the following habitats to make observations and then compare them.

1. Visit the Rock Garden habitat.



- Observe what is on the floor of the garden (rocks, soil, etc.).
- Observe conditions of light (is it sunny or shady?).
- Observe the presence or absence of water (is there a pond or irrigation pipes?).

- Describe the heights, sizes, and kinds of plants growing in this garden (trees, flowers, etc.).
- Look for places where animals (insects, birds, squirrels, etc.) could live in the garden (trees, under rocks, etc.).
- What animals do you see directly or see evidence of?

2. Visit the Woodland Garden habitat.



- Observe what is on the floor of the garden (rocks, soil, etc.).
- Observe conditions of light (is it sunny or shady?).
- Observe the presence or absence of water (is there a pond or irrigation pipes?).
- Describe the heights, sizes, and kinds of plants growing in this garden (trees, flowers, etc.).
- Look for places where animals (insects, birds, squirrels, etc.) could live in the garden (trees, under rocks, etc.).
- What animals do you see directly or see evidence of?

3. Visit the Perennial Garden habitat.



- Quietly observe the Perennial Garden habitat.
- Observe what is on the floor of the garden (rocks, soil, etc.).
- Observe conditions of light (is it sunny or shady?).
- Observe the presence or absence of water (is there a pond or irrigation pipes?).
- Describe the heights, sizes and kinds of plants growing in this garden (trees, flowers, etc.).
- Look for places where animals (insects, birds, squirrels, etc.) could live in the garden (trees, under rocks, etc.).
- What animals do you see directly or see evidence of?

4. Compare the soil, light, water, and shelter conditions in the garden habitats you visited.

- How are these conditions similar?
- How are they different?
- Compare the kinds of plants and animals that live in the gardens.
- Are the same plants living in different habitats?
- Are the same animals living in different habitats?

The Back Story:

A habitat is a home for an animal or plant. Animals and plants can live in many habitats, even sandy deserts, deep oceans, and snowy mountains. A habitat for an animal must have everything it needs to live: food, shelter, air, and water.

Different animals need different kinds and amounts of food, shelter, air, and water, so they live in the habitat that is right for them. A habitat for a plant must have light, air, water, and soil. Plants live in habitats that have the right kinds and amounts of those things.

Sometimes animals and plants can change or adapt when their habitat changes. For example, when the air gets very warm some birds build nests with materials that keep their babies cool. When animals or plants cannot adapt to changing conditions, they might leave to find a new habitat or they might die. Sometimes habitats disappear altogether, for example if a forest burns down or is cut down or a pond dries up. When that happens, the animals and plants in those habitats lose their homes.

1. The Rock Garden habitat is covered with rocks of many sizes. Water flows freely through the sandy or gravelly soil (good drainage). Plants in the rock garden habitat can live without large quantities of water (drought tolerant) and are usually small, compact, or creeping. Look for colorful flowers that bloom in the spring and summer including Creeping Beardtongue (penstemon), Alpine Lady's Mantle, and Aubrieta. Some areas in the Rock Garden may be sunny and others may be shady.

Animals that might live in the Rock Garden habitat include insects (especially ants), small rodents that might live under large rocks, and snakes that sun on the warm rocks and prey on the rodents.

2. The Woodland Garden habitat has a forest floor covered with leaves, twigs, and moss; beneath this floor is a shallow layer of soil. Animals on and under the floor include insects (Western Thatch Ant mounds extend 4 feet below ground!) and earthworms. Other animals that make their home in the Woodland Garden include bats, owls, squirrels, rabbits, and elk.

Many plants are in the Woodland Garden habitat. Trees include Douglas-fir, Giant Redwood, Coast Redwood, Dawn Redwood, Japanese Maple, Paperbark Maple, Sourwood, Sweet Gum, Katsura, Persian Ironwood, Incense Cedar, and Vine Maple. Shrubs include Smoke Tree, Hydrangea, Rhododendron, Azalea, and Witch Hazel. Groundcover on the floor includes Epimedium.

3. The Perennial Garden habitat features flowering plants that live for more than two years. The colorful flowers are dazzling! Several different fuchsias grow and bloom summer and fall, die back every winter, and then grow and bloom again the next summer. Old garden roses, irises, and peonies of many varieties are also in the Perennial Garden. Three species of cedars are in the Perennial Garden: Atlas cedar, Deodar cedar, and Lebanon cedar.

The most enchanting animals that live in the Perennial Garden habitat are hummingbirds and butterflies. This is a good home for them because of the steady supply of nectar in the flowers that grow there and the presence of protective shelter. You might see tiny hummingbird nests hanging from branches.