

DICKINSON COUNTY NATURE CENTER

GRADE 2 — “DICKINSON COUNTY HABITATS”

Core expectations

2-LS4-1 Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.

Activity Time

One 45-minute session

Program Alignment with Iowa Core Curriculum

Disciplinary Core Ideas

- **LS4.D Biodiversity and Humans:** There are many different kinds of living things in any area, and they exist in different places on land and in water.

Investigative questions

- What is biodiversity?
- How many different kinds of animals live in Dickinson County?
- How does the environment affect animals and plants that inhabit the area?

Investigative phenomena

- The naturalist will show pictures of animals in their habitats and students will be asked to make observations.

Practices (SEPs)

- Students will make observations about various animals in their habitats, which they will then use to make comparisons.
- Students will identify common characteristics of animals that live the same habitat and recognize that scientists look for patterns and order when making observations about the world.

Contact

Environmental
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Supplies

All supplies brought by the nature center unless otherwise arranged.

- Pictures of animals in various habitats
- Animal cards
- Habitat posters
- Tape

Background

The state of Iowa is home to thousands of different species of living organisms. There are almost 1,800 species of plants, more than 750 species of vertebrates and thousands of invertebrates that call Iowa home. These species all contribute to the state’s biological diversity, or biodiversity. Biodiversity is the variety of life in a given area, whether that area be an oak savanna forest, a small stream, or the entire ocean.

In the state of Iowa there are roughly 40 species of mammals, more than 400 species of birds, 45 species of reptiles, 21 species of amphibians, 148 species of fish and more than 30,000 different insects. All these animals have specific habitats that they are adapted to, and each enriches that area’s biodiversity by living there. In Dickinson County, we have a variety of animal habitats including oak savanna, tallgrass prairie, wetlands and several more.

It is incredibly important to protect our local biodiversity because ecosystems with higher biodiversity are usually more stable and healthy. Biodiversity also helps keep the balance of nature. For example, if we were to take all the snakes out of an ecosystem, all the snake prey populations — such as mice — would increase, and all the animals who eat snakes would experience a population decrease. Biodiversity is especially important to humans because it provides us with a variety of food and materials. Without the diversity of pollinators, plants and soils, we would have a lot less variety of produce at our supermarkets.

Program outline

- 1) The naturalist will begin by asking students if they know what biodiversity means. Students will be shown pictures with many animals in a habitat and pictures with few animals in a habitat and asked which habitat has greater biodiversity.
- 2) Next, the naturalist will review parts of a habitat with students. Every animals needs food, water, shelter, and space in order to survive.
- 3) The naturalist will then hang up posters of different habitats that can be found in Dickinson County. What animals do you think would live in each habitat? Let’s find out!
- 4) The class will be split into groups of three or four students, and each group will receive various animal cards. Students will read the animal cards and discuss with their groups which habitat the animals would live in.
- 5) Once all the groups are done, groups will take turns sharing with the class which habitat they put their animals in and why. If the class agrees, a member of the group will tape that animal to its habitat poster. If the class disagrees, discuss which habitat that animal should live in.
- 6) The naturalist will discuss with students how some animals may need to move through different habitats to get everything they need to survive. For example a deer may live in a forest and receive its shelter there but travel to a grassland prairie for food and a wetland for water. So some animals may fit into more than one habitat.
- 7) Once all the animals have been placed on their poster, the naturalist will ask the students which habitat has the greatest biodiversity. How many of you have visited one of these habitats in Dickinson County? What kinds of animals and plants did you see there? Compare and contrast students’ stories of visiting different local natural areas.