

Eco-Memories Post-activity

Program at Nature Station: Nature Detectives

Grade Level: 3rd – 6th

Program Length:

Prep Time – 15 minutes.

Activity time – 30 minutes – 1 hour

Group size: variable

Setting: Classroom

Vocabulary and Concepts:

- ecosystem – a community of plants, animals and smaller organisms that live, feed, reproduce and interact in the same area or environment
- food chain – the transfer of food energy from the source in plants through a series of animals eating and being eaten
- food web – an interlocking pattern of food chains.

Materials:

- chalkboard or easel paper
- poster paper
- crayons or markers

Background Information:

An ecosystem is a community of plants, animals and smaller organisms that live, feed, reproduce and interact in the same area or environment. Ecosystems have living, once-living, and non-living components that all interact with each other. During their visit to the Nature Station, the students explored at least three types of ecosystems: a grassland; forest; and a lakeshore. This post visit activity allows the students to recall and discuss different aspects of these ecosystems. The students will then work in groups to produce a poster depicting these ecosystems.

Procedure:

1. Discuss with the students the definition of an ecosystem. What types of ecosystems are there? What kinds of ecosystems did they explore during their visit to the Nature Station? The main ones were a grassland, forest and lakeshore. Write the names of these ecosystems in columns on the chalkboard or easel paper.
2. Ask the students to name any specific plants and animals that they actually saw or heard while visiting each ecosystem. Did they see any evidence of animals (i.e., woodpecker holes, chewed acorns, partially-eaten leaves)? What other animals and plants might be present that weren't seen? List their answers in the appropriate column below each ecosystem name.

3. Using the plants and animals listed under each column, ask the students to describe a simple food chain that might exist in that ecosystem. Can they also give an example of a simple food web?
4. Ask what non-living things (i.e., boulders, mud, sun, buildings, etc.) did they observe in each ecosystem? List a few of them in the appropriate column under the ecosystem. How could animals depend on these non-living things for survival?
5. Have the students divide up into small groups of four. Pass out poster paper, crayons and markers to each group. Instruct each group to create a poster illustrating one of the ecosystems they visited at the Nature Station. They can draw the non-living features (i.e., lakeshore, tree line, sun, clouds, rocks, etc.) they observed, as well as the plants and animals that would live in these ecosystems.

Assessment or Evaluation:

Hang or hold up each group's poster in front of the class. The groups can describe their ecosystem poster. What plants, animals and features are present? What food chain/web exists? What relationships exist between the living and non-living things?

(Optional: Perhaps each group could make up a story about their ecosystem and portray it in the poster. The groups could then present their stories to the class.)