

Pre-Visit Activity:

The Comforts of Home

Objective: By examining their own homes, students will identify the minimum requirements for life. They will use this information to compare their needs with the needs of plants and animals, explaining what animals and plants need to survive.

Background: All animals, including humans, have the same basic needs. Every animal needs a home. Most of us live in a home of some kind. But a home is more than just a house. The scientific term for an animal's home is "habitat". It is like a neighborhood that has everything in it that is needed for survival.

Procedure: Have the students think about the most important things they **need** in their home. Make a list of these items and talk about what they need to survive. Differentiate between needs and wants, challenging children to think about what is essential – **food, water, and shelter**. Write these words on the chalkboard. Air, space, and sunshine are important and will be discussed at the park. Food and water will be easy concepts for the students. Shelter may be more difficult. Ask the students to explain what shelter is.

Have the students draw a picture of their own home including pictures of where they find food, water, and shelter. Ask the students to label the parts of their drawings. Food and water will not be difficult to identify. Shelter could be shown by labeling the roof or ceiling of a house.

Once the drawings are completed, write two words on the chalkboard: **arrangement and habitat**. Say the words aloud asking the children to repeat them. Tell the students that when food, water, and shelter go together in a special way so that animals – including people – can live, we call that place a **habitat**. The food, water, and shelter are in an **arrangement** that makes it possible for the animals to live. Ask the students to write the word **habitat** in big letters at the top of their drawings.

In anticipation of the trip to Wind Cave National Park, ask the students what kinds of homes they might discover at the park - include the prairie, forest, and cave habitats. Have the students draw a picture of the animal or plant they selected in the **Nametag Activity**. Ask them to make sure they include its habitat – food, water, and shelter in an arrangement they think would make it possible for the animal to survive. When they have completed the picture, ask them to talk about their drawings, pointing out the habitat components they have included. As you drive to the park, have the students look for animals and for the animals' homes.

