

Alligator Hole Ecodrama

Subject: Science, Theater

Duration: 20 minutes

Location: Classroom / Outdoors

Key Vocabulary: Habitat, inter-relationships, wet/dry season, adaptations

Related Activities: Lake Okeechobee, The Everglades and the Rainy Season in Three Cups; Fish Relay; Why Alligators Look Like They Do

Florida Sunshine State Standards: SC.4.L.17, SC.5.L.17



Materials

- Optional: art supplies for students to make alligator snouts and bird bills for “costumes.”

Objectives: The students will be able to: a) describe the wet/dry season of the Everglades/South Florida, b) explain why alligators dig a “gator hole” during the dry season, c) explain why the alligator is sometimes called the “Keeper of the Everglades.”

Method: Students will act out an alligator hole ecodrama during the dry season, each playing the role of an animal using the alligator hole.

Background: There are two seasons in South Florida: the wet and the dry season. During the wet season (May - November) rain falls almost every day and surface water levels rise dramatically. Wildlife is dispersed throughout the Everglades. During the dry season (December - April), the rains diminish and surface water levels drop. Wildlife becomes concentrated in areas where water remains. Alligator holes become one of the few remaining wet habitats for wildlife during the dry season. Alligators, like all living things, need water to survive. The alligator’s powerful tail, jaws, and feet are used to keep a pool of water open throughout the dry season. Wildlife congregates at these “gator holes.” The alligator will eat some of the visitors while the gift of life (water) is what the survivors get. The alligator hole is an excellent example of an interrelationship.

Suggested Procedure

1. Choose a volunteer to be the alligator. Assign about one-third of the group to be fish and another one-third to be birds. The remaining one-third should include a snake, a frog, an otter, a deer, a bobcat and a panther.
2. Ask the students to act out the following narration:
“During the dry season a huge alligator digs a hole to hold water using her/his strong tail and legs. She uproots grass and excavates mud, slashing with her powerful tail, digging with her legs, and carrying away debris in her mouth. The alligator continues to work on her hole while she lives there, deepening it, widening it and keeping it free of debris.”

Gator holes are often the only source of water for wildlife during the dry season. The first to seek out the water are the fish who swim their way to the gator hole (have fish swim in). The fish are happy now that they have found water, even though it is smaller and a gator is near. Although the alligator will eat some of the fish (have gator tag one or two who will die), it is their only hope for survival.”

“Next birds fly to the gator hole. Here they find fish to eat (choose a bird to eat a fish). Reptiles such as snakes, and amphibians like frogs slither, hop, and swim to the gator hole. Finally, mammals seek out the fresh water provided by the gator hole; otters slide in to drink and fish, deer eat grass nearby and come for a drink, bobcat and maybe even a lone panther hides in ambush nearby in search of a meal, and then a visit to the gator hole for a drink.”

“Now everyone is in the gator hole. What does the alligator provide for the wildlife? (Water) What does the wildlife provide for the gator? (Food!)”

Evaluation

Ask the students why the alligator has been called the “Keeper of the Everglades.” Explain how this is an interrelationship.

