

Lake Mead

Environmental Education

National Recreation Area
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior



Grade 5 - Field Program

"Variety is the Spice of Life!"

Theme	At first glance, the Mojave Desert appears barren and lifeless, but upon closer study, the area supports a diverse population of plant and animal life.
Objectives	Students will record/compare the number of different plant species within two study areas. Students will record/compare evidence of animal activity within two study areas. Students will relate one way they think biodiversity is important.
Vocabulary	<u>biodiversity</u> - the condition of nature in which a wide variety of species live in a single area (the variety of living things) <u>endangered species</u> - an animal or plant species in danger of becoming extinct <u>species</u> - a class of individuals having common attributes and designated by a common name <u>transect</u> - a sample area of vegetation usually in the form of a narrow continuous strip that is used for the tabulation of data likely to vary within a stand or area. <u>threatened species</u> - a species whose numbers are low or declining
Background Information	<p>Lake Mead is an excellent resource for studying diversity in the Mojave Desert. Although most people are well acquainted with the recreation area's water, that resource only comprises 13% of the recreation area. The other 87% is land based. In its 1.5 million acres, Lake Mead NRA supports over 900 plant species and approximately 345 animal species which include mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds.</p> <p>Although biologists are not exactly sure of how many species of living organisms there are on earth, there is clear evidence that at least 1.4 million living species have been named. Several references indicate speculation of 5 - 30 million living species. There is worldwide concern regarding a decline in the earth's biodiversity. The consensus of the scientific community is that the rate of decline is directly related to human population expansion and habitat destruction. Lake Mead NRA is concerned about the decline of biodiversity and is taking steps to slow this process within its boundaries and the surrounding areas.</p>
Before the Field Trip	In preparation for your field trip, a ranger will be conducting a program in your classroom. Topics such as safety at the park, the mission of the National Park Service and expectations while on the field trip will be presented at that time.
After the Field Trip Activity	Now that the students have experienced conducting diversity studies, have them do their own study in their yards at home or in the school yard. How do they compare with the study conducted at Lake Mead National Recreation Area? Which area was more diverse and why?



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