

# Mount Rainier

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mount Rainier National Park  
Ashford, WA



Post Activity: Where do I fit?

Objectives: Students will be able to describe and classify animals that live in Mount Rainier National Park's three life zones. Students will examine similarities and differences of these animals, and be able to infer their habitat.

Notes: One of the categories with which to classify animals is habitat preference. It is relatively simple to separate those animals that require a snowy mountain habitat from those that live in a forest. A more challenging task is to differentiate animals that require ancient forest from those that can survive in younger forests. Extensive research has been conducted in Mount Rainier National Park to learn about the habits and habitat requirements of creatures such as the Spotted Owl. In the park, this bird has been found only among the snags, huge trees, and layered treetops of the old-growth forests. On the other hand, birds like the Pacific Wrens and White-Crowned Sparrows are better able to survive in the lighter, open brush environment of younger forests. The White-tailed Ptarmigan feather color changes with the seasons and it survives by growing feathers on its feet to guard against the cold snow and wind.

Materials: Printed animal cards, hole punch and string or tape to attach animal cards

Procedure:

- Begin by discussing or brainstorming what animals might live in Mount Rainier National Park. Ask the students to imagine themselves as one of those animals. If they could be any animal in the forest, what would they want to be? Have each student choose an animal card showing what animal he/she has chosen to be.
- Now sort the students by a predetermined but unrevealed category, such as "has wings / doesn't have wings," or "has fur / doesn't have fur." Make sure not to reveal the category to the students. Separate the children into groups according to the animal pictured on their card.
- Have the compare the animals in each group and then try to guess the category. It's best to have several categories in mind before starting the game.

Note: Older children may be challenged by classifying animals by habitat and food preferences, while the primary grades do better with appearance and other more obvious characteristics.

Possible sorting categories: physical attributes (color, size, wings, number of legs), where they live (in the soil, in the treetops, swims, flies), what type of life zone they inhabit (younger second-growth forests vs. ancient forest, what they eat (only plants, only other animals), and many other.

Alternate procedure: Begin the activity in the same way, but instead of silently sorting the children, call out a category, such as "eats only plants" or "has fur," and have the children sort themselves into the proper groups.

Extensions:

- 1) Have the children find out more about the animal that they chose for this game. Ask them to consult several books and prepare a few sentences on their animal.
- 2) Go deeper into where humans get their supplies for their life needs. Investigate a local water source, food supply, building material company, or any other local store.

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