

# Mount Rainier

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mount Rainier National Park  
Ashford, WA



**Objectives:** Students will be introduced to the meaning of “habitat.” Students will generate a drawing of their own life needs and be able to comprehend that animals have similar needs. Students will be able to differentiate diverse animal’s habitat, and generalize similarities between humans and animals.

**Notes:** All animals, including people, need homes or “habitats.” We usually think of our home as a house, but if we consider our need for food and water, our home extends far beyond our house. Animal’s homes are also bigger than their shelters, as they often venture out to find food and water. A black bear finds winter shelter in a den just slightly larger than its body, but in summer will typically range over an area of thirty or more square miles to find enough food. A pika gathers grasses in hay stacks so it can survive the long snowy winter. A beaver’s food is also its materials for shelter. At Mount Rainier, animal homes are all over!

**Materials:** Crayons, colored pencils, enough worksheets for each student

## Procedure:

1. Pass out worksheets and coloring supplies. Ask each student to draw a picture of where he or she lives, being sure to include all the things they need to live, such as a place to cook and store food, places to get food and water, a place to sleep, etc.
2. When the drawing are finished, discuss them with students. Ask them to point out the survival needs like food and water that they included in their drawings.
3. Have the children hang up their drawings where everyone can see them. Point out that although each home is different, they are all homes and include similar basic things. Using the drawings as a reference, discuss the question, “What do people need to survive?” On the blackboard, make a list of the students’ idea under the heading “people.” Do the same for wildlife. After both lists are complete, ask the students to see if they can group together some of their ideas into larger headings. (For example, warmth might be combined with a place to sleep or a place to keep dry, and all can fit within the heading of “shelter.”) See if the students can narrow down the two lists and come up with the basic survival needs for both animals and people.
4. Talk about how homes are different for different kinds of animals. Ask the students to imagine a bear’s home, or an ant’s home, or an elk’s home. Where do these creatures sleep, where do they find food and water? How do they satisfy their basic survival needs? What would happen if an ant had to go as far as a bear to find its food? (It probably would not survive, since the distances are too great for an ant to travel.) Would we be able to survive in a home where the bedroom was ten miles from the bathroom and fourteen miles from the kitchen? (Probably not; this would not be a usable home or habitat for us.)
5. All animals, including people, need usable homes, where they can find the basic things they need to survive. For animals, these homes are called “habitats.” They are usually much bigger than the animal’s den or burrow, since most animals need to leave their shelter in order to get food or water. Point out that our homes are really quite similar – we need to go outside the house to get food and to buy extra “cover,” such as clothing and blankets. Like animal homes, our homes are much bigger than our houses.
6. Once the students have an understanding of “habitat,” write a few sentences on the chalkboard to define it. As much as possible, make use of the ideas that the students suggested. For example,

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“Habitat is a place with food, water, shelter, and space. Habitat has the things that animals need to survive.”

7. The students may write these sentences at the bottom of their home drawing. They may also write their own sentence about what habitat is, perhaps drawing a new picture to illustrate their words.

### Extensions:

1. Adaptations: Ask the students what would happen if your habitat began to change? What if it got colder, how would the students change? What if it got hotter, wetter, dryer, or windier? What if all the grocery stores closed? And how long would it take to change? An adaptation is a change or the process of change by which an organism or species becomes better suited to its environment. Animals have to be able to adapt to survive in this changing world. Humans are no different. Discuss what adaptations are. Ask the students to hypothesize what physical adaptation humans could grow to make life easier. (Like an extra arm to carry extra grocery bags, a tail to help us balance, an extra eye so we can see behind us, etc)
2. Go outside and look for animal homes. Be sure not to bother the animals or their homes in the process! Discuss the idea that they are probably only seeing one part of the animal's home, since the animal probably uses a much larger area for finding food and water.



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