



## National Park Service Rock Creek Park Environmental Education

### ADAPTATIONS

Watching a squirrel in search of acorns, finding a bird's nest sitting in a bush and following deer tracks into the forest are just some of the experiences that students may encounter as they stroll through a forest in search of animal habitats. Students will discover what all animals, big or small, need for survival.

**TOPICS:** Adaptations, Habitats

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

All animals, even humans, have adaptations that help them to survive in their environment. These adaptations can be structural or behavioral or both. The basis of evolution and classification systems rely mainly on identification of some adaptations. By using the adaptations of animals found at Rock Creek Park as examples, this program will introduce students to the concept "win, lose, or adapt".

**Where:** Rock Creek Park Nature Center

**Length:** 1 hour

**Who:** 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes

**Students per group:** maximum of 30

**Chaperones per group:** 4- 6

#### **CURRICULUM BASE: Based on the District of Columbia Science Standards**

2nd Grade: describe similarities and differences in body parts.

2nd Grade: identify the five classes of vertebrates

3rd Grade: describe adaptations that help living things meet their needs.

3rd Grade: describe how living things adapt to their environment.

**OBJECTIVES:** By the end of the program, students will be able to:

1. Define the word "adaptation".
2. Describe three animal adaptations.
3. Explain how an adaptation helps an animal survive.

#### **SAFETY MESSAGES:**

1. Avoid Poison Ivy
2. Handle Live Animals Properly



## HABITAT HUNT PRE AND POST- TRIP ACTIVITIES

**Pre- trip activities:** Prior to your visit to Rock Creek Park, please take a moment to read this presite. The pre- trip activity will not only introduce students to the concept of "habitats", but it will also enable them to make later comparisons between their needs and the needs of wild animals. The post- trip activity is designed to reinforce the program by comparing habitats of some of Rock Creek Park's animals.

### Pre- Trip Activity

#### EVERYBODY NEEDS A HOME

- a. Ask each student to draw a picture of where he or she lives- or to draw a picture of the place where a person they know lives. Ask the students to include in their drawings pictures of things they need to live; for example, a place to cook and store food, a place to sleep, a roof to keep them dry.
- b. Allow a few students to share their drawings and point out the places they need.
- c. Put the pictures up around the room- making a "gallery of homes". Point out that everyone needs a home.
- d. Ask the students to close their eyes and imagine a bird's home, a beaver's home, a squirrel's home, an ant's home, a fox's home, and a worm's home.
- e. Compare the homes. Talk about what all animals need to survive; food, water, shelter, and space. Explain that this area is the animal's habitat.

### Post- Trip Activities

#### WILD ANIMALS

- a. Split the class into groups and have them identify habitat needs for any five wild animals that live in Rock Creek Park (deer, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, songbirds, beavers, foxes, bats, mice, moles, snakes, turtles, and even worms, spiders, millipedes, or types of insects).
- b. play charades with students acting out habitat components from (a). When all five components are identified see who can guess the animal.

#### MATCHING ACTIVITY

- a. Pass out "Matching" activity sheets.
- b. Ask the students to draw lines matching the animals on the left to a part of their habitat (food, water, shelter, and space) on the right. Note: only use each animal and each habitat component once. An answer key is included.

#### MY FAVORITE HABITAT

- a. Ask the students to think back to the park program and the animals at Rock Creek Park. Have them think of their favorite animal that lives in the park, and draw its habitat. Remind them to include all four components (food, water, shelter, and space) in their picture.
- b. Find a good place to hang your habitat pictures at school, or write a letter to the Park Rangers at Rock Creek Park and tell them about your favorite animal and its habitat.

## **HABITAT PLEDGE**

- a. Pass out copies of the "Habitat Pledge" to the students.
- b. Ask the students to think back to the sharing circle part of the program. Ask them to think of one way that they can help protect animal habitats. Ask each student to write his or her idea at the end of the pledge. Help the students read their pledges.
- c. Once again, Rock Creek Park would love copies of the students' pledges.