

# What's in the Forest?

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## **Summary**

Students learn about forest food chains and create a forest habitat in the classroom.

## **Grade level**

Kindergarten

## **Time required**

60 minutes, plus a fieldtrip

## **Materials**

Recordings of forest sounds  
Butcher paper  
Old newspapers  
Pictures of forest plants and animals  
Large cardboard tubes  
String  
[Food chain handout](#)

## **Goals**

By completing this lesson, students will

- 1) be introduced to the concept of interdependence in Nature
- 2) define a simple forest food chain and
- 3) develop inquiry process skills.

## **Science standards addressed**

### *National Science Standards*

- Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry
- Systems, order and organization
- Organisms and their environment

### *American Indian Science Standards*

- Plant and animal life cycles as exemplified in traditional American Indian concepts such as the Medicine Wheel.

## **Teacher tips**

Display many pictures of forest plants, insects, and animals in the classroom to facilitate

student response to “What’s in the Forest?”. Gather pictures of forest plants and animals for students to use in creating example food chains on the board.

Roll several large pieces of cardboard into long tubes and cover with brown paper to serve as tree trunks. Tape long pieces of string to the ceiling to suspend student made birds and insects. If desired, create templates of leaves, plants, and animals for student use, or let students draw their own. Try to keep the drawings fairly large and somewhat to scale. After drawings are complete, trace around them and cut them out. Staple together the two, leaving an opening to allow for paper stuffing, and creating a three-dimensional paper sculpture.

Schedule a speaker from the Tribal Natural Resource Department to talk about how the tribe is taking care of the forests (406-883-2888). As an alternative, contact a state park or National Forest Service office.

### **Background information**

Forests organisms comprise a food web, of which trees are an integral part. Trees, both living and dead, provide shelter and food for other plants, insects, fungi, and a variety of animals.

### **Procedure**

#### *Engagement*

- 1) Engage students in a visualization of being in a forest. Play recorded forest sounds. Ask students to answer the question, “What’s in the Forest?” List all of the student responses in a large chart. Give hints and clues if necessary.
- 2) Go through the list of student responses and ask students what each thing needs to live. List student responses

#### *Exploration*

- 1) Talk about how everything in the forest depends on other things to survive. Give examples, such as the fox that lives under a tree and eats the bird that nests in the tree and eats the caterpillar that lives on the tree branch and eats the leaves. As you talk, put up a picture of a fox and a bird on the board and draw a line connecting them. Draw a line from the bird to the caterpillar, and so on, to create a *food chain*. Write the word “eats” along each line.
- 2) Ask student volunteers to create other food chains on the board using the animal and plant pictures provided.
- 3) Ask students what would happen if parts of the forest disappeared. For example, ask them to predict what would happen to the caterpillar if there were no leaves for it to eat. Ask students to make predictions for other examples.

#### *Explanation*

Tell students that they are going to make a forest *ecosystem* in the classroom. Ask them what things they will need to put in the forest to make sure there is a chain of food that the forest needs. Let students pick at least one thing to make, either by using a template or by drawing. If students are drawing without a template, help them to use correct scale

and to include details that will help identify their plant, insect or animal. Assist students in stapling and stuffing their organisms with crumpled newspaper.

*Elaboration*

Visit a forest with a tribal biologist. Ask the biologist to engage students in identifying the different organisms at the site. See if students can find a food chain there. Ask the biologist to talk about local forest issues of concern (e.g., the disappearance of leopard frogs from the Flathead Reservation, the bark beetle epidemic, etc.).

*Evaluation*

Give students the food chain handout and ask them to pick three items that would make a food chain. Have students connect the three items in a chain.

**Vocabulary**

ecosystem

food chain