

## Making Habitracks! ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁



In this outside activity, kids will identify the components of habitat by using a map and exploring their surroundings.

This fun, learning activity involves map-making (optional) and map-reading skills along with observation skills.

Habitat is the place, or environment, in which an animal lives. Although different wildlife species have different habitats, all wild animals need food, water, shelter and adequate space in an arrangement appropriate to the animal's needs.

### Materials

Note cards and/or unlined paper (8-1/2" X 11" or larger); scissors; pencils, markers or crayons; small bag (optional)

### What To Do

1. Draw a simple map of the area around your school, home or a selected area of a park. An adult can do this, or if the children are old enough, they can try it. Besides the natural features (trees, shrubs, grass, flowers), include sidewalks, buildings and other human-made struc-

tures on the map.

2. Pick a wild animal whose habitat you want to explore (bird, deer for example). Make a habitat card which lists the four things all animals need to survive: food, water, shelter, space. See the drawing for an example. Also make four note-card sized cards and write the name of one of the habitat components on each card.

3. On each map, design a route of travel for the animal (child) to follow. Indicate the route by drawing the tracks left by the animal along the trail. The tracks can be simple, hand-drawn tracks or can be copied from a printed wildlife field guide you may have at home (see examples on next page). Write the name of the animal whose tracks appear on the map with the word "habitat" at the top of the page – BIRD HABITAT for example.

4. Using the map as a guide, place the four habitat component cards along the trail in various plac-

es. If you want, you may place the cards in spots representing the habitat component. For example, put the water card near a water spigot or bird bath, the food



Mark Shock

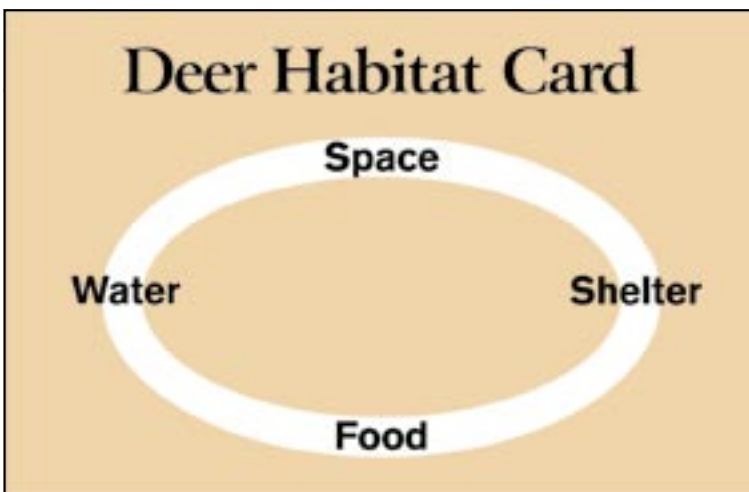
*Turkey habitat is fun to explore. Look for tracks and signs of mast.*

card in a bush, the space card in an open area. Reminder: make sure the cards are visible along the trail you have drawn on the map.

5. Take the child to the beginning of the trail. Give the child the map and the habitat card which lists all four habitat components. Explain that they are to slowly follow the tracks on the map and search for the four cards which have the habitat components listed on them. Tell them that these represent the four things that an animal needs to survive. You may want to give them a plastic grocery bag or similar bag to place the cards in as they find them.

6. After the child has found all the cards, tell the child that food, water, shelter and space have to go together in a suitable arrangement for an animal to live. For example, animals need the right amount of space to survive. A bear needs more space than a rabbit. Animals must have the right amount and right kind of food. An animal can't survive if one of these components is missing.

If you are doing this activity with several kids, you may want to



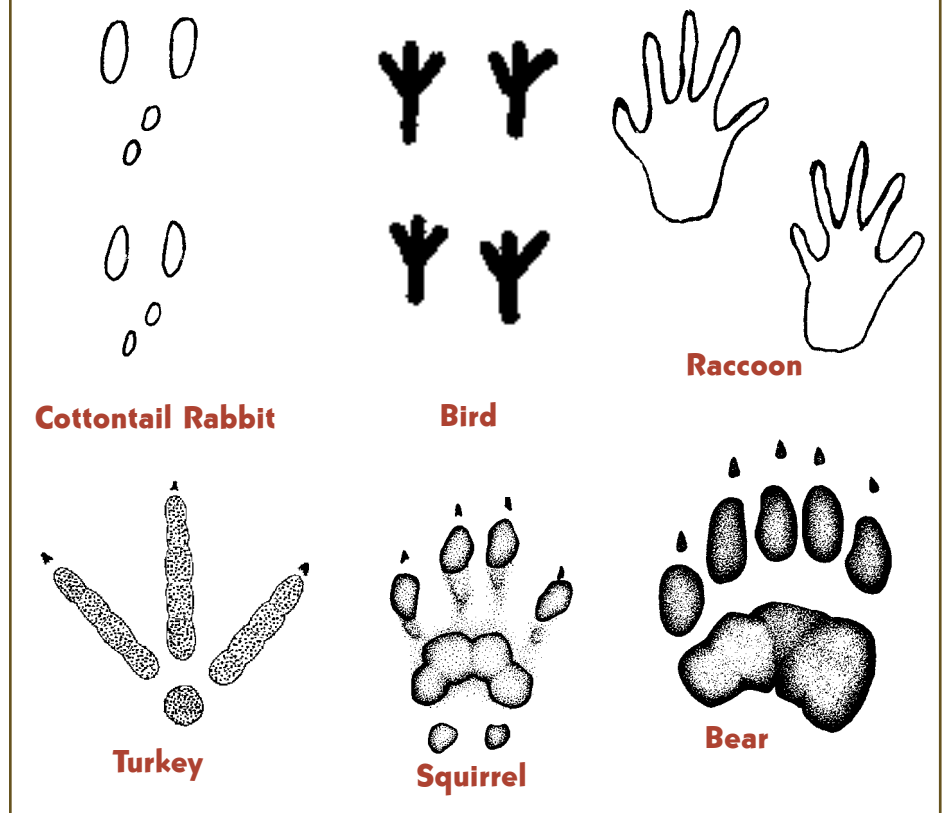
*An example of a habitat card.*

choose a few different animals and make the appropriate number of maps, habitat cards and individual component cards. For each different animal, use a different color for the habitat cards and component cards – brown cards for the deer and red for the bird. You could even have the different teams make their own maps and trails and let the other teams find the habitat components.

*This activity was adapted with permission from Project WILD, 2001 (Council for Environmental Education). Teachers and youth group leaders may obtain a Project WILD guide by attending a workshop.*

*For more information, contact Elizabeth Gallaher, Project WILD Coordinator, at 304-558-2771 or [elizabethgallaher@wvdnr.gov](mailto:elizabethgallaher@wvdnr.gov).*

## Samples of hand-drawn (top row) and field guide tracks



## NATURE NOTES: Night Vision

**H**ow can a hawk see a mouse while flying hundreds of feet above the ground? How can an owl navigate through thick woods in the dead of night?

The exceptional eyesight of some wildlife can be explained by the light-sensitive nerve cells called rods and cones present in their eyes. For example, a hawk's eye isn't larger than ours, but the hawk's vision is almost eight times sharper, due to several amazing adaptations.

Deer are thought to be color-blind because their retinas are covered almost entirely by rods, which are sensitive to light but cannot detect colors. However, with the greater number of rods present

in the eye, deer see quite well at night and in dim light. Likewise, the eyes of nocturnal animals, such as owls, contain almost entirely rods, which explains their superior night vision.

Another adaptation that improves an animal's night vision is a reflective layer of tissue on the inner surface of the eye. This tissue serves as a natural mirror and increases the likelihood that dim



*Owls, such as these saw-whets, have great night vision.*

Rob Tallman

light will stimulate the rods. As a result, the animal's eyes shine just like the reflector on a bicycle.

For more information, check out the website [www.ebiomedia.com/gall/eyes/nocturnal.html](http://www.ebiomedia.com/gall/eyes/nocturnal.html).