

Actions for Apes

The Missing Piece

How can you save a species that lives on the other side of the globe? It fits in the palm of your hand! Join us to learn about some of the most loved species and what you can do in Houston to help preserve their habitat in Africa.

Materials Needed

- 1) Assorted materials for tower – tape, straws, pipe cleaners, rubber bands, paper, etc.
- 2) Baskets or bags for materials

Activity Procedure

- 1) Begin by asking the participants what activities they do every school day. Make a list of these activities on the board. On the other side of the list, have them brainstorm what things they need in order to complete these activities.
- 2) Discuss with the participants how they rely on these people and things daily to get their day accomplished. Point out that it is the exact same way in an ecosystem – everybody/thing has to work together and rely on one another. This is called interdependence. Each contributing factor plays a role, and without it, life would not exist as successfully. Explain that the same holds true for any ecosystem, including natural ones. Organisms depend on one another and their habitat, and if something is eliminated, it could offset the balance and flow of the entire system.
- 3) Divide the participants into groups and give each group one basket of materials, plus a roll of tape. Instruct the participants that with their group, they are to design and build a tower using the materials in their basket. They do not have to use every single material in their bag, but encourage them to be as creative as possible, with the goal being to build the tallest freestanding tower.
- 4) Once all groups have finished, give them another basket of materials but take the roll of tape away from their supplies. Instruct the participants that the second half of this challenge requires them to duplicate their original design without the use of tape.
- 5) Ask each group how successful it was in re-creating the structure without the use of tape. The groups can compare their challenges and discuss the level of difficulty in the second half of the activity compared with the first. Then focus back on the topic of ecosystem interdependence. Tell students that much like in their own lives, every living thing in a chimpanzee's forest habitat depends on every other. Ask them to imagine that every object they used to build their tower is a different living thing within a forest where a chimpanzee lives— different animals, plants, streams, etc. In the activity, the tape represented trees/habitat

space. When we eliminated the tape, we could no longer keep the tower in balance. The same thing will happen in a forest habitat. Eliminating an essential part of a chimpanzee's habitat not only affects those animals but other animals that need the trees to survive. These trees provide them food, water, and safety. Mining of tantalum from cell phones removes trees from forest across Africa which affects chimpanzees and countless other animals.

More Information

This activity was modelled after an activity from WWF Wild Classroom. More information can be found [here](#).