GIRL SCOUTS: Home Sweet Habitat

Activity Snapshot

Activity	Time allotment	Intent	Method	Example questions and phrases
Night Hike I - adaptations	45 minutes	Investigate animal habitats and discover how our Zoo creates good homes for its animals	Observation Inquiry	Tell me what you know/notice about this animal (or its exhibit) What type of habitat do you think this animal is found? How do you know?
Ambassador Animals	20 minutes 10 min. buffer	Connect with animals by experiencing them up-close (possible touching)	Meet & Greet	How is this animal well adapted to live in its environment? What challenges/threats might they face there?
Sowing seeds for pollinators	30 minutes 5-10 min. cleanup	Create habitat starters for pollinators –seed balls!	Seed ball creation	By planting seed balls in your yard, you can help provide food, shelter, and a safe space for pollinators to visit!
Night Hike II - endangered species	30-45 minutes	Learn about the status of various species in the wild, their importance to the environment, and how we can help them	Discussion Critical thinking	Are jaguars important? Why? What to jaguars do for the environment? Why is this species threatened/endangered in the wild? How can recycling (or other action) help bear populations?
Nature play exploration	15-20 minutes	Explore habitats found in ETW and search for wildlife that call the space home!	Play!	What signs can you find that animals live here? (i.e. caterpillars or monarch cocoons, chewed leaves) Key items to note: milkweed and screech owl boxes

Additional resources:

How plants manipulate the scatter-hoarding behaviour of seed-dispersing animals

Animals you might not know are pollinating flowers

Seed Ball Activity

Ingredients: Seeds, clay, compost, water, mixing bowls, newspaper pots

Steps:

1. Inform scouts that we are going to do an activity that will help create better habitats for pollinators –seed balls! By planting seed balls in your yard, you can help provide food, shelter, and a safe space for pollinators to visit!

2. Ask scouts what plants need to survive, covering the basic survival needs of organisms (food, water, shelter, space). The seed balls will provide many of these things! **The clay and compost casing will provide protection from seed predators, the clay helps maintain moisture as the seed ball is watered, and compost provides essential nutrients the seeds need to germinate.** Various forms of seed balls have been used throughout history –from ancient Chinese civilizations to Native American tribes. For these people, **seed balls simplified their agricultural processes to produce high crop yields, while today we often use seed balls in ecological restoration projects and to create fun garden activities.**

3. To start, provide each scout with a clump of clay. Moisten clay with water and have them work the clay until it is the consistency of yogurt or a soft serve ice cream, adding water as needed.

4. Mix with compost, working it until the matrix is workable enough to form into balls and hold together, but not too sticky. If the mixture is sticky, add a bit more compost.

5. Have each scout pinch off seed-ball size clumps and add a few seeds, while rolling into a ball. Each seed ball should only have 1-4 seeds. Too many seeds in one ball will cause seedlings to be stressed and not thrive.

6. As seed balls are rolled, they can be added to their paper pot to dry and easy transportation. **Make sure each pot is clearly labeled with their name prior to adding seed balls.** Leave seed balls to air dry overnight.

   Extension: Share information about Zoo's pollinator gardens during morning tour and show them some of the pocket gardens spread out across Zoo grounds. You can tie in bee houses as a next step, if there is time.