

It's Your Niche

Activity Objective

Students will be able to define habitat and niche and create business cards for native, non-native, and invasive aquatic species.

Classroom Instructions

1. Review habitat with students (food, water, shelter and space in a suitable arrangement). Tell students that habitat can be considered an animal's address. Explain to students that in this activity they will be not only looking at animals' addresses, but animals' jobs (niche), as well.

2. Talk about roles in the environment. What makes an invasive species good at his job? (Reproduces fast/a lot, can eat anything/more, flexible habitat, etc.) Invasive carp are a great example.

3. Discuss the neighborhood the students live in. Everyone has an address and most people have jobs. The job might be a role that a person plays in the community. Animals have roles in the ecosystem or community they live in. This role is called the animal's ecological niche. It includes such things as where and how it gathers its food; its role in the food chain; what it gives and does for the community; its habits, periods of activity, etc. It can also be described as what an animal does for a living. What happens if they are not there? What if someone steals their niche?

4. Allow students time to choose and research an aquatic species found in the Great Lakes. They should find out its niche and choose one thing this animal does well.

5. Their assignment will be to create a business card for that animal advertising its job in the community. To help them, you may want to bring in a few "real" business cards to look at.

6. Here is an example of an animal business card.

7. Business cards should include the following: name of animal, job title, company name, address, phone number, slogan and illustration or symbol for business.

8. Hang business cards on the bulletin board and call it "Whose Niche?" Discuss the ecosystem you have created. How do invasive species play a role?


9.* **Extension**—have students work to create billboards for their animals business on large paper.

Materials

- ~ 3"x5" blank index cards
- ~ Coloring materials
- ~ Animal ID guides/posters/internet
- ~ *Large paper

Grade Level

Second through eighth



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