

# HABITAT

## A Home For All

Scientists call the different broad environments biomes. For example, deciduous forests, tropical rain forests, and the arctic tundra are three types of biomes. Within each biome, there is a huge variety of smaller environments in which plants and animals live. These smaller environments are called habitats. A habitat is where a plant or animal is normally found.

The oak tree to the right is home to many different animals. The life of each animal is closely tied to the continued existence of the oak. The robin nests in the lower branches, feeding on the insects that make their home on the ground around the tree and throughout the oak grove.

The downy woodpecker feeds on the insects and insect larvae that live under the bark of the oak tree. The woodpecker also drills out a nest hole in the dead branches of the tree in which to lay its eggs and raise its young. When the woodpecker babies have flown away, other birds will use this nest hole for their own families.

The caterpillar feeds on the oak's leaves. When it is ready, it will spin its cocoon, fastening itself to a oak twig.

The whitetail deer rests in the shade of the tree during the heat of the day, nibbling on the acorns.

Other animals also make their home around the oak. Snakes shelter in the leaf litter under the spreading branches, occasionally feeding on the small rodents, birds and lizards who also live around the tree. Lizards dart around the trunk and lower branches looking for insects. Beetles and millipedes feast on the remains of the dead animals and insects and plants, returning nutrients to the soil. In the ground around the roots of the oak tree, burrowing animals make their homes, and earthworms chew their way through the soil, making room for water and air to reach and feed the oak tree roots.

No animal or plant lives all by itself. Every living thing depends upon other living things for food and shelter. Many animals can live in only one type of habitat. Some can eat only one type of food, or build their nest or hang their cocoon on one type of tree.

**DISCUSSION:**

What will happen if the oak tree dies or is destroyed?

Tell about a habitat in your own life. What kinds of plants and animals live together in that habitat. How do they interact with one another? What do they eat? Where do they sleep? What would happen if you took away one of the plants or animals in that habitat?

**ACTIVITY**

List the different types of habitats you can think of.

Which one would you not like to live in? Why?

On a separate piece of paper, draw (or make a collage of) your favorite habitat. Put in the animals you might find there, showing where they live and what they eat. Explain why you like this particular habitat.