

Exploring the Estuary



Overview:

Exploring the Estuary is an activity designed to get students out into the estuary to explore the different coastal habitats by searching for common plants and animals found in those habitats. This activity is a scavenger hunt designed for younger children but can be adapted for use with teenagers and adults. Students will use simple observational skills to find various items commonly found in the estuary.

Materials:

- collecting bags
- scavenger lists
- field guides (optional)

Background:

A scavenger hunt is a fun way to get students to use their knowledge while exploring the estuary. Before beginning the hunt, make sure that everyone understands that no live animals or whole plants should be collected. Show your students the sea oats that grow along the dunes and ask them not to pick it or pull it up. Sea oats should be left alone because they play an important part in preventing dune erosion. Remind students that the estuary is home to many plants and animals and not to disrupt their habitat in the search for scavenger list items.

Activity:

Select a small area that includes a variety of habitats such as beach, dunes and marsh. Either mark off the boundaries for the search or provide an adult for each group. Provide each team of two or three students with a scavenger list and a collecting bag. Inform the students how long the team will have for the hunt (20-30 minutes) and set them loose. When the time is up, blow a whistle and have each team show which items they've collected. A quick check will reveal the winning team. As you go through the items on the scavenger list, point out unique features of the plant or animal and discuss the role the organism plays in the associated habitat.



Grade Level

1st – 5th

Objectives

- * To develop observational skills.
- * To explore the different habitats in the estuary.
- * To identify the different animals and plants found in the estuary.
- * To be able to match estuarine animals and plants to their habitats.

N.C. Standard Course of Study

Grade 1
(1.L.1.1)

Grade 4
(4.L.1.1)

Grade 5
(5.L.2.1, 5.L.2.2,
5.L.3.1)

Scavenger Lists

Plant List

- A thick leaf
- A flower
- Seaweed
- A leaf with a strong smell
- A piece of a vine
- A seed
- A needle-like leaf
- A piece of grass
- A berry
- A segmented plant
- A cone
- A thorn

Animal List

- Crab claw
- Scallop shell
- Egg case
- Bone
- Feather
- Oyster shell
- Sharks tooth
- Crab molt
- Whelk shell
- Marsh periwinkle shell
- Mud snail shell
- Ribbed mussel shell

General List

- Something green
- Something black
- Something hard
- Something white
- A shell
- Something straight
- Something fuzzy
- A round object
- A piece of litter
- Something pretty
- Something camouflaged
- Something soft

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