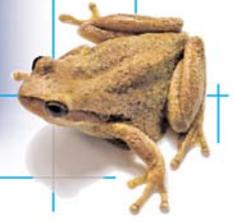




NRM Education

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“Ecosystems Rule, OK!” Game

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This outdoor game demonstrates the fragile, variable and dynamic nature of ecosystems.

- *Ecosystems describe a group of plants and animals that are in some way connected by the resources they require for survival.*
- *Ecosystems are specific habitats that behave as integrated units.*

Introduction

Class splits into say 6 groups on oval.

Each group symbolizes a family of honeyeaters i.e. adults plus fledglings. Fledglings in each group link arms to form a circle symbolizing the safety of the nest.

The one adult bird per group must leave the nest to bring back food (nectar, symbolized by either large sprigs or flowers strewn around open space between the groups), or insects, (symbolized by plastic toy insects or similar).

First trial game: adult honeyeater has say 30 sec to collect as much “food” as possible and return it to the nest. If there are six groups, lay out nine or ten pieces of “food”.

Second game: remove some pieces of food so there is say only five pieces but six birds seeking food.

Third game: set out the food again and introduce the first predator (a cat) who tries to tag the birds in their hunt for food. A tagged bird is a dead bird that must sit down and take no further part in that game. Birds are safe once they have returned to the linked-arm “nest”. Families whose adults return safely to the nest with food receive one point per game.

***Teacher may like to debrief with the class after some of the games and ask them what is happening here when the variables change. Get them to verbalise what they are experiencing. Sample question: “what happens when there is not enough food?”

Fourth game: play with the variables e.g. increase/decrease the distance between groups, and hence the distance to get to food, and/or increase/decrease the number of flowers/insects (food) so that not every bird will get any.

Fifth game: introduce a second predator as well as the cat, e.g. a hawk or falcon, who will hunt small birds on the wing

The winning group is that which has the most points at the end of all the games.



Preparation

One cone for each group's position on the oval is a good idea. Honeyeaters could dress up somehow; ditto the predators, cats could wear a cat mask, and so on, to aid identification.

Questions for the class debrief

The class debrief is an integral part of the game.

Ask class what this game is showing them about life in the real/natural world.

Sample questions: "What happened when the honeyeaters had to travel further to get food?" what happened when two predators were introduced?" etc

Key words: habitat, territory, predator, prey, energy needs, environmental stresses, interconnectedness, variables, in balance, out of balance, competition

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