



Sandhill Cranes like this one usually build their nests in wetland habitats.

At Home in a Habitat

An animal's habitat

is where it finds food, water, and shelter, and where it raises its young. The trees and other plants, water, soil, and rocks are part of a habitat. One habitat is home to a variety of birds, small and large mammals, insects, worms, spiders, snakes, frogs, and others. Many animals

live in the same habitat year-round. They raise their young there and live there in winter, too. Other animals spend spring and summer in one habitat and travel, or migrate, to a different habitat to spend the cold months. All over the world, people of all ages—people just like you—are taking action to help habitats.



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Habitat Means Home

There are **MANY** different habitats. Forests, deserts, swamps, high mountains, grasslands, lakes, ponds, rivers, and seashores are all examples of habitats. Your backyard, the local park, and the weed-filled empty lot down the street are habitats, too. Animals can survive and thrive in just about any healthy habitat!



With so many trees cut down, this forest is no longer a good home for many animals.

Healthy natural habitats are good for wildlife and for people. Take a look at a forest, for example.

A healthy forest is big enough to provide food and shelter for many different kinds of plants, birds, and other animals. Forests help keep our air clean and our landscapes beautiful. Trees can keep soil from being washed into lakes, rivers, and streams when it rains. Those bodies of water are home to fish, turtles, and other living things. They also provide drinking water for animals and for people, too. In a habitat, everything is connected.

Unfortunately, a healthy habitat can become unhealthy when any part of it is damaged. Native plants can die or be crowded out by nonnative plants. The animals living there can no longer find the food, water, and shelter they need. But when communities create and preserve natural spaces—places like parks, shorelines, nature preserves, wildlife refuges, and wetlands—healthy habitats are available for many plants and wildlife, and people can enjoy them, too.

DIY!



Habitat Outside Your Window

You don't have to travel to a forest, seashore, desert, or any other faraway place to find habitat for wild things. All you have to do is go outside! Your front yard, backyard, and even your schoolyard are all habitats for a variety of animals and plants. Look under a fallen tree limb or pile of leaves, for example. They provide food and shelter for ants, termites, beetles, earthworms, millipedes, and salamanders. Mushrooms and mosses grow there, too.

You can make your yard a healthy place for birds, other small wildlife, and insects with a few simple actions. Plant native plants to provide the right kinds of food and shelter for the native animals that live in your area. A variety of plants is better than a grassy lawn. Provide a source of clean water. Be sure to keep cats indoors. Then keep watching to discover the wild things that visit the habitat outside your window.



The Trouble with Trash

How can people help preserve and protect healthy habitat? They can reduce, reuse, and recycle to cut down on trash. Each person in the United States produces about 4.6 pounds of trash each day. That comes to about 270 million tons a year.

What do you do with things you don't need anymore? Do you throw them away? But where is "away"? On some other planet? When it comes to trash, there is no such place as "away." Our trash must go somewhere. Most of it is put into landfills—huge holes dug in the ground

that are filled with trash and then covered with soil. But Earth doesn't have room anymore for all the trash each of us piles up, and if it is burned or dumped at sea, trash pollutes our air and water. All of this harms habitats.

The good news is that there are many better ways to deal with our waste. People can recycle paper, plastics, glass, and metal that can be turned into useful products again. We can buy products that are made from materials that don't pollute. We can use food scraps and leftovers, leaves, and other plant material to make compost that can be put back into the Earth to help plants grow.



Which of these things do you do at home and at school?

- recycle paper, plastics, glass, and metal
- use a refillable water bottle
- use food scraps and leftovers, leaves, and other plant material to make compost
- other (write it here): _____

The Tap Is Where It's At!



Habitat Heroes

Who can be a habitat hero? Anyone! No one is too young or too old to get involved. Here are some habitat-helping actions: plant trees and other native plants; clean up and reduce trash; keep cats indoors and dogs leashed; turn off lights at night when birds are migrating; ride bikes, walk, or use clean "green" fuels to reduce the effects of climate change. How many of these things can you do?

Lungs of the Earth

Are trees important to us? You bet they are! Plants were able to get along just fine before people arrived on Earth. But if all the trees and other plants died tomorrow, so would all the people.

Trees are sometimes called “the lungs of the Earth.” They breathe just like we do. But there’s a difference. We need oxygen to stay alive. We breathe in oxygen, which our body uses, and breathe out part of the air called carbon dioxide. Trees take in carbon dioxide through pores in their leaves. They use it to make the food they need to grow. At the same time, trees release oxygen back into the air. And so the cycle continues. When we protect trees, we are helping all living things!



Eight Reasons to Thank a Tree



Trees make life better for people and wildlife. Here are seven reasons to save woodlands and forests worldwide. Add your own special reason for saying, “Thank you, trees!”

Thanks for...

1. providing homes for birds and other wildlife.
2. providing food for people, birds, and other wildlife.
3. helping to clean the air by releasing oxygen and filtering out harmful gases, dust, and other pollutants.
4. helping keep water clean by holding soil in place when it rains so it doesn’t run into lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams.
5. blocking powerful winds.
6. keeping Earth cooler by providing shade and releasing moisture into the air.
7. adding beauty to Earth.
8. and for _____



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