

Habitats at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

A habitat is where plants and animals live. Animals need food, water, shelter, and a place to raise their young. Plants need a place to grow (soil), water, and sunlight. Plants provide homes and food for the animals. The interactions of plants and animals in a habitat form a complex web of life, with each participant relying on others for survival.

As you visit each habitat, ask your group these questions:

- What words would you use to describe this habitat? (wet, dry, shady, open etc.)
- What animals do you see living in this habitat? (Mammals, insects, birds, reptiles and amphibians)
- What other animals might be living in this habitat? (Who eats whom?)
- What kinds of plants live in this habitat? (Remember to compare them to the other habitats)
- What conditions do these plants need to survive? (wet, dry, shade, sun, etc.)
- How are the animals using the plants for shelter and food?
- Have a discussion about food chains in this habitat. We need the sun to provide energy for the plants to grow to feed the animals that eat other animals.

Wetland Habitat

We have several wetland habitats throughout the Center. A wetland is a “wet” habitat where water is present. These habitats are important as filters for water and for food for many animals. Wetlands are often found between land and water.

Desert Habitat

In the courtyard and in the theme gardens, you will find a desert habitat. In order to survive in this habitat, the plants must adapt to harsh conditions where it is very hot and dry. The cactus has large, thick, fleshy leaves to keep water from evaporating quickly and a root system close to the surface so it can soak up the water quickly.

Woodland Habitat

As you hike the woodland trail, look for the levels of plant life supporting the different kinds of wildlife. The tall trees catch the sunlight and are the food-producing layer. The next layer of small trees, shrubs, ferns, plants and grasses provide food and shelter for additional animals. On and under the woodland floor, many plants and animals live. Here is where dead plants and animals decompose to provide nutrients for plant growth.

Savannah Meadow Habitat

The Savannah hike takes you through an open area surrounded by oak trees. Over one hundred years ago, Austin was a vast savannah of large open areas of grassland with oak trees where fires enabled the plants to survive and thrive. Today, continued settlement, grazing, non-native growth, and the suppression of fires, have eliminated much of our savannahs.