

# Designing a Habitat

Study Units

[Aquatic Life](#); [The World in an Pond](#); [People, Land, and Water](#)

## Supplemental Information

Many animals associated with aquatic habitats in Iowa are threatened, endangered, or have even been extirpated from the state. Destruction of habitat is a major factor in the declines of these species' numbers. Some examples of habitat destruction include drainage of wetlands, channelization and/or damming of rivers, and increased turbidity and nutrient loading due to soil erosion.

## Teaching Suggestions

Do the activity, "[Fashion a Fish](#)" as an introduction to this activity. Discuss animal adaptations as they relate to habitat. Add some "Iowa critters" to the list of animals to research. Some interesting animals include (Note: Some of these animals are former residents of the state that have been extirpated.):

- **Mollusks:** three-ridge clam, Higgens' Eye mussel;
- **Fish:** brook trout, common carp, paddlefish, shovelnose sturgeon, Johnny darter, orange throat darter, longear sunfish, black redhorse, black bullhead;
- **Amphibians:** spring peeper, American toad, bullfrog, central newt, green frog;
- **Reptiles:** massasauga rattlesnake, Blanding's turtle;
- **Birds:** mallard, whooping crane, swamp sparrow; and
- **Mammals:** river otter, raccoon, mink, muskrat, beaver.

## Optional

Have students describe their animal's habitat needs in writing, in a drawing, or by creating a collage.

## Extensions

- Visit a DNR Fisheries visitor center with display aquariums.
- Set up a classroom aquarium. (Make a list of animals you plan to keep and their habitat requirements. Some things to consider are: space, food, oxygen, and cover to hide behind.)
- Do the activity, "Water Canaries." What are some of special habitat requirements of indicator species?

## Evaluation

See the guide.

## Student Materials

Student Worksheet



## Designing a Habitat: Student Worksheet

You are going to design a **habitat**. A habitat is an area with **everything** an animal needs to survive. Research information about your animal so that you can design its habitat.

1. Animal's name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Average size as an adult \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the foods eaten by the animal? Are they the same throughout its life?
4. Does the animal lay eggs or do the young develop in the mother's body?
5. How do the parents care for the young after they are born?
6. Does the animal have any special adaptations for living in a certain kind of habitat? List them and tell how they benefit the animal.
7. Now you know some important facts about the animal. Using these facts, design a habitat for it. You may make a model of the habitat, describe it in a paragraph, or draw a picture of it.

