



Terrific Turkeys (Modified from Growing Up WILD)



Prep

Review the essential components of habitat that all wildlife species need to survive: food, water, shelter, and space. Ask students if they think that all of these things are readily available at all times. What are some examples of an increase or decrease to any one of these components? Examples include drought, habitat fragmentation, invasive species, or disease. Explain to students that they will be playing a game that illustrates how wildlife populations change over time in relation to the availability of food, water, shelter, and space.

Materials

- Food and water cards
- Turkey and turkey predator cards
- Hula hoops, floor spots, cones, blankets, jump ropes or other markers for the playing field
- Ping pong balls, plastic Easter eggs or another token to represent turkey eggs

How to

- Set up the playing field outside, or in a large indoor space. On one end of the field, set up hula hoops or other markers to represent nests and roosts. Nests and roosts should be able to be distinguished from each other. For example, use cones to denote nests and hula hoops for roosts.
- On the other end of the playing field, set up a blue hula hoop as the water source (place water cards inside) and a green hula hoop as the food source (place food cards inside). On one side of the field, designate an area to represent the predator den.
- Assign roles to each student by handing out turkey/predator cards. Some students will be toms, and will find a roost to stand in. More than one tom can occupy a roost because turkeys often communally roost together in trees. Some students will be hens and will find a nest to occupy. There will be ping pong balls in each nest to represent eggs.

- Some students will be turkey predators (bobcat, great horned owl, coyote, etc), while others will be egg predators (raccoon, skunk, rat snake). All predators will go stand in the predator den. Lastly, one student will be a turkey hunter. The turkey hunter will stand off to the side until hunting season starts.
- Explain to the students that the turkeys have to find one food card and one water card each day, and then have to return to their roost or nest before the sun goes down. Predators and hunters will be introduced to the forest gradually. Turkey predators will chase the turkeys and tag them on the shoulder to catch them; they then have to bring them back to the den before going out to hunt again. Nest predators will try to get to the hens' nests while the hens are out foraging. They have to take one egg at a time to the predator den. If a hen is on a nest, or a tom is in a roost, they are safe. The hunter can only hunt during turkey season, and has to remain stationary (they can pick where they would like to set up their turkey blind). Hunters can only take one turkey per season. Once they catch one, they're not allowed to take any more.
- To start and end each round, call "Sun up" or "Sun down!"
- After each round, tally the number of turkeys that survived (did not get eaten by a predator and also picked up one food and water card). Did any turkey nests fail (all of the eggs were eaten)? Was there enough food and water to go around? Were any turkeys hungry or thirsty at the end of the day? As more predators entered the forest, was it harder to avoid being caught?

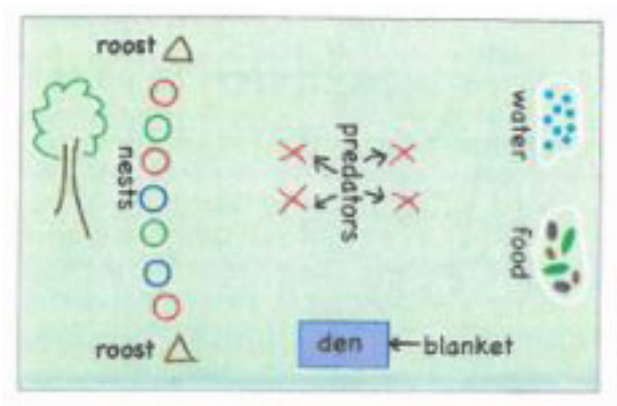


Image: Growing Up WILD

About Project WILD/Growing Up WILD

Project WILD's mission is to provide wildlife-based conservation and environmental education that fosters responsible actions toward wildlife and related natural resources. All curriculum materials are backed by sound educational practices and theory, and represent the work of many professionals within the fields of education and natural resource management from across the country.

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