



Merry Lea

Environmental Learning Center
of Goshen College

Exploring Nature

3rd - 5th

Program Description

Students will experience the natural world using most or all of their senses, exploring seasonal changes in Indiana ecosystems. Grade-level specific objectives vary, and include concepts such as adaptations, life cycles, food webs, and more.

Program Objectives

Students will:

- Discover how a habitat affects the survival of a living organism
- Explore what it means to be non-living and living and the characteristics of a living organism
- Discover there is great diversity among plants and animals
- Learn what living things need to survive

Program Outline

1. Hike

Students head out on our trails to get a close-up view of what plants and animals are doing this time of year. They participate in age-appropriate scavenger hunts, games and other hands-on activities.

2. Vernal Pond Exploration

While on the hike, students stop at one of our vernal ponds to search for macroinvertebrates and amphibians living in the water.

3. The afternoon is filled with a variety of age-appropriate activities. Options include:

- Songs
- Games
- Stories
- An introduction to Merry Lea's Ambassador Animal

Vocabulary

- Food Web
- Ecosystem
- Non-living
- Adaptation
- Habitat
- Living

Quick Facts

Season Spring: April - May
Summer: June

Grades 3rd - 5th

Program Length 4 hours

Maximum # of Students 80 Students

Standards Correlation

LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms: Reproduction is essential to the continued existence of every kind of organism. Plants and animals have unique and diverse life cycles. (3-LS1-1)

LS4.C: Adaptation: For any particular environment, some kinds of organisms survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all. (3-LS4-3)

LS2.C: Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience: When the environment changes in ways that affect a place's physical characteristics, temperature, or availability of resources, some organisms survive and reproduce, others move to new locations, yet others move into the transformed environment, and some die. (secondary to 3-LS4-4)

LS1.A: Structure and Function: Plants and animals have both internal and external structures that serve various functions in growth, survival, behavior, and reproduction. (4-LS1-1)

LS2.A: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: The food of almost any kind of animal can be traced back to plants. Organisms are related in food webs in which some animals eat plants for food and other animals eat the animals that eat plants. Some organisms, such as fungi and bacteria, break down dead organisms (both plants or plants parts and animals) and therefore operate as "decomposers." Decomposition eventually restores (recycles) some materials back to the soil. Organisms can survive only in environments in which their particular needs are met. A healthy ecosystem is one in which multiple species of different types are each able to meet their needs in a relatively stable web of life. Newly introduced species can damage the balance of an ecosystem. (5-LS2-1)

LS2.B: Cycles of Matter and Energy Transfer in Ecosystems: Matter cycles between the air and soil and among plants, animals, and microbes as these organisms live and die. Organisms obtain gasses, and water, from the environment, and release waste matter (gas, liquid, or solid) back into the environment. (5-LS2-1)