Merry Lea
Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College

Biodiversity
6th - 8th

Program Description

Students discover the diversity of life at Merry Lea firsthand by exploring multiple ecosystems on our trails. In each habitat, students identify native organisms and discuss the interconnections of mammals, insects, plants, humans and more. Assess the importance of biodiversity by flipping logs, interpreting abiotic features, and meeting the flora and fauna of Merry Lea.

Program Outline

1. Habitat Hike
   Students spend a large portion of the day hiking and exploring the different ecosystems at Merry Lea including prairie, meadow, wetland, forest and lake. They participate in several activities including:
   - Habitat Study: Students spend several minutes observing and comparing different ecosystems while filling out an ecosystem study sheet.
   - Forest Floor Diversity: Students observe and explain how invasive species impact the diversity found on a forest floor.
   - Field Guide Exercise: Students have an opportunity to practice using a variety of field guides to identify different plant and animal species.

2. Afternoon Options Include:
   - Games
   - Insect Search

Program Objectives

Students will:
- Explain the concept of biodiversity including its importance
- Define the terms producer, consumer, decomposer, prey, predator, herbivore, carnivore and omnivore
- Create a small food web using organisms at Merry Lea

Vocabulary

- Herbivore
- Carnivore
- Omnivore
- Prey
- Predator
- Producer
- Consumer
- Decomposer

Quick Facts

Season Fall: September - November
Spring: April - May
Summer: June

Grades 6th - 8th

Program Length 4 hours

Maximum # of Students 80 Students

Standards Correlation

6th - 8th Grade

LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms: Animals engage in characteristic behaviors that increase the odds of reproduction. (MS-LS1-4)

LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms: Plants reproduce in a variety of ways, sometimes depending on animal behavior and specialized features for reproduction. (MS-LS1-4)

LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms: Genetic factors as well as local conditions affect the growth of the adult plant. (MS-LS1-5)

LS2.C: Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience: Ecosystems are dynamic in nature; their characteristics can vary over time. Disruptions to any physical or biological component of an ecosystem can lead to shifts in all its populations. (MS-LS2-4)

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