

Diversity of habitats in Americas

The following activities are intended to be used as a follow-up to the virtual tour of the Toronto Zoo's Americas pavilion, with a focus on the wide diversity of habitats in the Americas.

ACTIVITY ONE – Create a habitat for a toy animal

On a rainy day, make a habitat for some toy animals out of items from around the house and things you find outside.

1. Get a large metal or glass baking dish (9x13" or larger) with sides. Cover the bottom of the dish with oatmeal, rice, pebbles, play sand – anything your parents say is okay. (For our photo, we raided the pantry and used a mix of dry quinoa and wheat bran. When you're done playing, you can put this material in a covered container and save it for future play.)

2. Think about what every animal needs in its habitat:

Air – Your habitat needs plants! Plants provide shelter, food, and turn CO₂ into oxygen for your animal to breathe. Make some plants out of clay, paper, or anything else you can think of. We used some fake plants, branches from the garden, and made a tree out of a cinnamon stick and paper.

Shelter – Animals need shelter to sleep or hide in, and to get away from the sun or rain. Make some good shelter spots for your animal out of Lego, sticks, or whatever you can find.

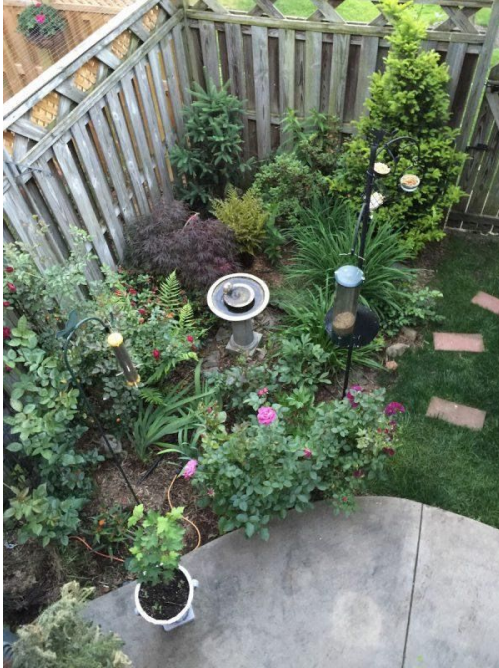
Food – Does your animal eat plants? Meat? Both? Make some plants or put some toy prey animals in your habitat to represent your animal's favourite food.

Water – Make a stream or watering hole in your habitat by cutting a piece of blue paper or even using a little dish of water if you want to get messy! (A jar lid makes a great watering hole.)

Space – Create paths so your animal can get around its habitat.

3. Take a photo of your habitat and show us online! Use the hashtag #mytzhabitat





ACTIVITY TWO – Investigate the habitat outside your door

Did you know that you have a habitat right outside your door? That's right... your backyard, balcony, park, or greenspace near your home are all examples of habitats.

Study the habitat outside your door. Watch to see what animals live there. Can you spot a bird, insect, mammal, reptile, and amphibian? How do the animals use the habitat? Watch how things change as spring turns to summer, then summer to fall.

Photo credit: Habitat Network
<https://content.yardmap.org/learn/placing-habitat-features/>

ACTIVITY THREE – Discover the countries of the Americas

The “Americas” is a term used to describe North and South America and their associated islands.

Look at a map to see the many different countries that make up the Americas. Some of the countries are very hot because they are close to the equator while others, like Canada, are cold and snowy for part of the year.

Have you ever been to any of the countries on holiday? Maybe you or your parents were born in one of those countries? Ask them what it is like there.



Credit: <https://www.conservapedia.com/Americas>

ACTIVITY FOUR – Research different ecosystems in the Americas and the animals that live in them

An ecosystem is made up of all the living and non-living things in an area. Living things include plants and animals, while water, rocks, and soil are examples of non-living things. There are lots of different ecosystems in the Americas, such as deserts, forests, wetlands, grasslands, and tundra.

Look at the Toronto Zoo website and choose some animals that live in the:

Americas Pavilion - <http://www.torontozoo.com/animals/americas>

Canadian Domain - <http://www.torontozoo.com/animals/canada>

Tundra Trek - <http://www.torontozoo.com/animals/tundra>

Find out the country the animal comes from, what kind of ecosystem it lives in, and write down some adaptations it has for surviving in that kind of ecosystem. Use the chart below to record your findings.

Draw a picture of and/or write a story about your favourite animal from the Americas. Be sure to include details about the ecosystem it lives in!

Animals of the Americas

Animal	Country or Countries in the Americas	Ecosystem (Where is the animal found?)	Adaptations (Creature Features)
Polar bear	Canada United States (Alaska)	Tundra	Thick fur Large feet with sharp claws and bumpy pads

