

Match the Habitat Cards

Grade Level: upper elementary/middle school

Duration: one 40-minute class period.

Skills: vocabulary, critical thinking, and team building

Subjects: science and language arts, fine arts (with additional activity)

Concepts

- Habitat is the place where an organism lives because it is adapted to find food, water, shelter, and space there. Habitat is located within ecosystems.
- Shorebirds are one part of a healthy functioning ecosystem.
- Wetland and grassland ecosystems provide extremely important habitats for shorebirds.
- Your local environment may provide important habitat for shorebirds.

Vocabulary

See the *Match the Habitat Terms and Definitions Cards* for 35 words.

Overview

By playing a card-matching game, students learn that shorebirds use diverse habitats to find food and a place to breed or to rest. Students will discover that shorebirds use these habitats to meet their own specific needs.

Objectives

After this activity, students will be able to:

- Name seven different habitat types used by shorebirds.
- Describe the three reasons many shorebirds use more than one habitat type throughout the year.
- Correctly match habitat terms with their definitions.

Materials

- Set of 30–60 game cards (included here)
- A completed *Match the Habitat Clues Sheet*

- A copy of the *Habitat Readings* for each student or student team found in the *Types of Habitats* activity

Introduction

Bog, mudflat, tundra, swamp, marsh, prairie pothole, playa lake, and beach are some of the many areas that people recognize as wetlands. Although these wetlands may have very different climates, plant communities, and food webs, they all have one thing in common—they are wet at least part of the year.

Most shorebirds depend on many different wetlands to nest, migrate, and rest during the winter season. In fact, shorebirds are especially adapted for life in the wetlands they inhabit. Shorebirds with long legs easily keep their bodies dry as they wade into water in search of invertebrates. The long toes of mudflat shorebirds help them balance on the slippery, wet mud or sand. Those with long, sensitive, pointed bills can easily probe the mud for small crustaceans. Shorebirds of rocky-intertidal wetlands have strong, chisel-like beaks designed for cracking open the mussels they find clinging to the rocky shores.

Some shorebird species live in dry upland grasslands. Their bills are adapted for gleaning insects from the surface instead of probing in the mud.

For more information about the unique adaptations of shorebirds, read *Shorebirds Have Special Adaptations* in the *Shorebird Primer*. For more information about shorebird habitats read *Shorebirds Depend on a Chain of Healthy Habitats*, also found in the *Shorebird Primer*.

Activity Preparation

1. Photocopy and cut out the *Match the Habitat Terms and Definitions Cards* included at the end of this activity. Add your own terms and definitions to the blank cards provided. Vary the definitions according to the reading level of your students. Focus on the habitats and definitions most appropriate for your area, and combine this activity with information your class studied in other shorebird activities.

Note: Twenty to 40 possible matches (40 to 80 cards) are a good level for seventh and eighth grade students. For younger students, use 15 matches (30 cards). You may choose to increase the number slightly for small classes (five to ten students).

2. Read through the Habitat Readings and complete the column “Source Clue” for each term on your master *Match the Habitat Cards Clue Sheet* by indicating what page and habitat reading the term came from.
3. Write your students’ names in alphabetical order on the chalkboard or flipchart.

Procedure

1. Have students take out one or two blank sheets of notebook paper to write their sentences on (explained below.) A set of *Habitat Readings* should be available as resource material.
2. Mix the term and definition cards together. Deal the cards to the students. It is not necessary that all students initially receive the same number of cards.

