

Age

Grades 2 – 5

Subjects

Social Studies, Science

Skills

Analysis, application, discussion, drawing, mapping, evaluation

Duration

30 – 90 minutes

Group size

Any

Setting

Indoors

Materials

- Pencil and paper
- Playing cards (or other polygon shapes)
- String
- Sample floor plans (optional)

Caribou need a home, too!

Objectives

Students should become aware that human activities can have an impact on caribou.

Method

Students draw floor plans for houses and then consider the effects on their activities of removing some of the space from use. The process is repeated for caribou ranges.

Background

Caribou require large ranges that meet their habitat requirements for food, water and shelter from predators, insects and weather. Caribou ranges include calving grounds, summer range, migration routes, winter range and other seasonally important areas. Human disturbance may prevent caribou from accessing critical habitat, destroy habitat or disrupt the movement of caribou herds.

Procedure

1. Have students brainstorm their daily living needs and the kinds of rooms they have in their homes to meet those needs.
2. Have each student or pair of students draw a floor plan of a house including rooms, hallways, doors, etc.
3. Give each student one or more playing cards to place anywhere on their floor plans. Then explain that these portions of their houses have been blocked off and can no longer be used. Discuss how the loss of these spaces affects the way they use their houses. Discuss where they can place the cards to have the least effect on their activities.
4. Brainstorm with the students on the habitat needs of caribou.
5. Have each student (or pair) design on paper a caribou range that incorporates all of the caribou's habitat needs.
6. Brainstorm the kinds of human activity that may occur in a caribou range. Have students place one or more playing cards over their caribou ranges. (The cards represent areas of human disturbance that may exclude caribou or alter their behaviour. String may be used to represent linear developments such as roads and pipelines.) Discuss how the disturbance could affect the activity of caribou in their ranges.

Variations

Have the students include on their range maps other animals who share their habitat with caribou. Examine with the class how other animals might be affected by changes to their habitat, and how this, too, affects caribou.

Extensions

1. Formulate research questions to test the effects of human disturbance on caribou.
2. Have the students consider both the direct and indirect effects of development. For example, a factory placed near the caribou range might remove some space from the range. This is a direct impact. However, the people who move to the town to work in the factory present an indirect impact associated with the factory. The influx of people might mean an increase in the number and type of recreational activities taking place on the caribou range. Another indirect impact would be any pollution produced by the factory that might harm plants the caribou eat.
3. Do this activity in conjunction with the "Barren-ground caribou migration" activity for a physical demonstration of habitat disruption.

Evaluation

Discuss with students:

1. The basic habitat needs of caribou.
2. Ways that human activity can disrupt caribou's use of habitat.
3. Ways that these effects can be mitigated.

