

Songbirds of Missouri

Meadowlark



Vocabulary

Match the word with the definition, then write a sentence using each word. Share your sentences with the class.

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| ___ Amphibians | A. In the country, away from the development of cities or towns |
| ___ Grubs | B. In danger of dying out |
| ___ Polygynous | C. The development of rural areas into cities, towns or other population centers |
| ___ Habitat | D. Foreign or originating from another country |
| ___ Mammals | E. Something original to a particular area |
| ___ Rural | F. The natural living area that contains the essentials to survival for a particular animal |
| ___ Exotic | G. The larvae of an insect, especially a beetle |
| ___ Ecosystem | H. Having more than one mate at the same time |
| ___ Native | I. Air-breathing, cold-blooded vertebrates such as snakes and lizards |
| ___ Reptiles | J. Warm-blooded vertebrates that give live birth and produce milk for their young |
| ___ Endangered | K. Vertebrates that live in water in larval form and develop into lung-breathing adults |
| ___ Urbanization | L. A community of living organisms interacting with their environment |

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: CA.1, CA.6, Goal 2.1)

Classroom Activity

Objectives:

After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Define exotic and native as they relate to plants found in Missouri
- Explain the effects exotic plants have on local native plants
- Describe the effect exotic plants have on local wildlife and their habitat

Materials:

- Notebooks
- Plastic buckets lined with wet paper towels for large plants
- Margarine tubs lined with wet paper towels for small plants
- Scissors or snips for cutting plants
- Tick and chigger repellent (optional, depending on the weediness of your collection area)
- Gardening gloves for plant pulling (optional)

Background:

The disappearance of native plants in the midwest has had an impact on many wildlife species. This plant-collecting activity is designed to show how plant species in our area have changed over the decades.

Procedure:

Prior to this experiment, find and get permission to use a vacant lot or other area for plant collection. The area should be big enough for several teams of students to collect plants. Make sure the site is free of potential hazards such as broken glass, poison ivy, etc.

Plants can either be cut with scissors or hand-pulled using gloves. Getting as much of the plant as possible will make identification easier. The goal is to find as many different plants as possible. Once a particular type of plant has been picked, nobody else on the team needs to get that plant.

1. Divide the class into teams of three to five students and assign each team to its plot. Provide one paper-towel lined bucket to each team, and one paper-towel lined margarine tub to each team member.
2. Collect plants, placing the large ones in the bucket and the smaller ones in the individual margarine tubs. Store the plants in a refrigerator or press them between newspaper sheets.
3. Invite a local plant expert to help identify your plants, and whether they are exotic or native. Vocational agriculture teachers, Department of Conservation plant experts, and college botany teachers are all good choices. If plant experts aren't available, use a field guide instead.

Students will discover many plants they collected – possibly all of them – are exotics. Discuss how exotics got here, and what plants were here before exotics arrived. Discuss how this exotic invasion has affected songbirds and other animals. Find out the roles native plants play in the life cycles of animals whose populations are declining.

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: Goal 1.2, 1.3

Grade levels: 4-12

Short Answer Q&A

1. What is the difference between exotic and native grasses?
2. What is causing the meadowlark's habitat to disappear?
3. How has the disappearance of this habitat hurt the meadowlark?
4. What other birds are being hurt by the disappearance of this habitat?
5. How do meadowlarks nest?
6. What are the advantages of the meadowlark's nesting habits?
7. How do meadowlarks help farmers?

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: Goal 1.5)

Writing Assignment:

Write a couple of paragraphs explaining why the meadowlark's habitat is disappearing, how it is affecting the meadowlark and what you think should be done to prevent the problem or at least keep it from becoming a bigger problem.

Explain who will be affected by the solutions you offer.

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: CA. 1, CA.4)