

Home Sweet Home

in the heartland

Young people can unite with the National Geographic Society to protect the environment by embarking on a learning adventure as a Missouri Habitat Hero. What are habitats? Plants and animals need air, soil, water, sunlight and proper climate to survive. Combinations of these life-giving ingredients are called habitats. Whales live in ocean habitats, deer in forest habitats, and beaver in aquatic stream habitats. Missouri's habitats include grasslands, forests, streams, river bottomlands, caves and wetlands.

Grasslands or prairies once covered northern and western Missouri. When Lewis and Clark crossed Missouri, thousands of bison roamed here. Agriculture and other human development have replaced most prairie habitats.

The prairie kingsnake is still common in Missouri. It is non-venomous and kills prey by constricting. Kingsnakes are immune to venom of other snakes. Learn more at www.conservation.state.mo.us/nathis/herpetol/snake/snake3.htm.

Be a Habitat Hero. Visit www.nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction and take the Habitat Hero pledge. Do your part to protect the environment and make Missouri greener.

Oak-hickory forests cover much of eastern and southern Missouri. Nuts from these trees provide food for animals. In the 1800s, turkey were common in the forests. In the early 1900s, forests were cut for lumber, overgrazed by livestock, and burned. Turkeys were endangered because of destroyed habitat. Now turkeys are abundant thanks to a 1950s restoration program.

Be a Habitat Hero. Treat trees kindly in our forests. Harming trees destroys animal habitat. Help make a world of difference environmentally.

Activities: In your newspaper, find an article about a person or group of people who are Habitat Heroes. Write a paragraph on why you chose that individual or group.

Share your thoughts with your classmates. You might want to invite that person or group to speak to your classmates.

Habitats depend on climate to survive. Research some distinct habitats in the United States. Compare the climate. Use the weather map to draw some feature of each habitat in the proper location. Is the weather there what you would expect for each habitat?

Use the vocabulary words *weather* and *climate* properly.



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