



MINNESOTA ZOO™  
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# Animals at Home

## Grades 4-6

### Pre-visit Activity

#### MN Graduation Standards supported:

##### Grade 4 IV. B

The students will know that living things can be sorted into groups in many ways according to their varied characteristics, structures and behaviors.

##### Vocabulary:

Biome - A community of living organisms within a single major ecological region.

#### Introduction:

Minnesota is divided into three major zones, each determined by a particular geographaphy and accompanied by certatin plant and animal populations. These zones are called biomes. They are coniferous forest, deciduos forest and grasslands. Within these biomes you find animal habitats.

**Coniferous Forest:** The coniferous forest is found in the nothern part of Minnesota. The climate can be cold, dry and windy and the soil is generally poor and sandy. Animals of the coniferous forest are adapted to survive long, cold wintes. Porcupines, wolverines, moose, wolves, great gray owl, lynx, fisher, ermine, woodchcuks, and hawks cam all be found under the dense evergreen canapy. Spruce, fir and pine trees grow here.

**Deciduous Forest:** The deciduous forest has shorter winters, which are cold enough for the trees to enter a dormant period, shedding their leaves in fall. The leaves decay on the forest floor producing a rich layer of soil. Some trees include maple, basswood and oak. Animals can find shelter, protection, and nesting sites among the trees. Many dwell in the soil, while others live among the shrubs and understory trees. Trees are a major food source. Gray fox, porcupines, weasels, opossum, squirrel and deer can be found in this type of forest, while the soil supports beetles, snakes and earthworms.

**Grasslands:** The rolling prairies of southwest Minnesota represent the grassland biome. The irregular rainfall of this biome and strong winds increase dryness and discourage the growth of trees. Short-lived grasses of the prairie create a very fertile soil. Many of the animals in the grasslands graze, hop, leap or have the ability to run very fast. Among the animals of the grasslands are hawks, snakes, rabbits, mice, prairie dogs and coyotes. Historically elk and bison roamed the grassland in abundance.

#### Objectives:

The leanrer will be able to identify the three basic land biomes located in Minnesota and give examples of plants and animals found in each.

**Links:**

[www.mnzoo.org/animals/index.asp](http://www.mnzoo.org/animals/index.asp)

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/biomes/index.html>

**Procedure:**

1. Discuss the three Minnesota biomes with the students.
2. Talk about the different kinds of animals and plants that are found in each type of biome.
3. Assign three different student groups each a biome to draw and color.
4. Make copies of the students' activity sheet and cut out the squares and place them in a container.
5. Each student picks one animal/plant square from the container.
6. Student should decide which biome their animal/plant belongs in and glue the square to the picture. (You can assign the student to find a picture of their animal/plant from either a magazine or the internet and glue it to the biome picture rather than the animal square.)