Objectives:

- Students will be able to define the term habitat and list the four basic elements which habitats provide for animals to survive there
- Students will be able to identify three different types of habitats, as well as wildlife that lives in each
- Students will observe and identify similarities and differences between habitats, as well as the ways in which these affect the plants and animals that live there

Grade: 1st and up

Time Frame: 30-45 minutes

Introduction:
Scenic Hudson parks provide a wonderful opportunity for students to use their senses to make observations. Sensory observations are well combined with a day of exploring habitats.

Background:
Habitats are homes for living things. For example, a forest is the habitat for a squirrel and a creek is a habitat for a fish. In order for an animal to survive, it must be able to find an adequate habitat that provides food, water, shelter, and a safe place to raise young. The amount and quality of these needs varies a great deal from species to species.

“What are your senses?” Explain to the students that Seeing (Eyes), Hearing (Ears), Touching (Fingers), Smelling (Nose) and Tasting (Mouth) are your five senses. We use our senses to learn more about the world around us. On this trip, students will use their senses of sight and hearing to explore habitats. You will walk, listen and watch for the types of animals that may use the habitats found in a local Scenic Hudson park. It is important to explain that in order to hear and see the animals, everyone will have to be very quiet while you walk and have to watch very closely to see if you will find animals in their homes. Ask, “If you are loud and yelling do you think the animals will want to be around us?” As you listen and look at the habitats you may want to record what you see on a pre-created observation activity sheet or blank journal page.
Materials:
- Clipboards (1 per student)*
- Pencils (1 per student)*
- Observation activity sheet or blank paper

Procedure:
1. Prepare your students by discussing what a habitat is and what it provides for wildlife (food, water, shelter, and a safe place to raise young). Brainstorm with your class to identify habitats you find locally and the plants/animals that live in each.

2. Select your park and the route for your habitat walk. It does not need to be a long distance. Most Scenic Hudson parks will allow you to see multiple habitats in a short distance. Recommended parks are listed at end of this lesson plan.
   a. It is highly suggested to pre-hike your walk in order to identify places to stop for discussion and interesting plants or features to point out.
   b. Common habitats in Scenic Hudson parks include streams, creeks, rivers, marshes, forests, and meadows.
   c. Depending on the amount of time you would like to be in the field, and distance you are comfortable taking your students, visiting three (3) different habitats is suggested.

3. The day of your trip, review habitats on the way to your park. Head to the trail head and begin your search for habitats here. Allow students to make observations of their own, but make sure to stop at all of your pre-chosen habitat locations.

4. When you arrive at your selected habitat, allow students to tell you what kind of habitat you are at.
   a. Encourage them to make observations that may help them identify the habitat.
   b. Discuss the features that make this habitat different from others.
   c. Ask what types of animals they think live in this habitat? Identify any distinguishing plants or animals you see in the area.
   d. Allow students to record their observations for each habitat.

5. Continue this process of observations and identifications for each of your chosen habitats.

6. Before concluding your trip review the habitats, plants and animals you learned about in the field. Discuss the ways the different habitats were similar. Encourage students to share observations they made.

Looking for an outdoor area for your Habitat Exploration? Scenic Hudson parks offer wonderful spaces to discover nature! Check online at http://www.scenichudson.org/parks to find a park convenient to you or visit one of these suggested parks for this activity:

**Madam Brett Park**
**Shaupeneak Ridge**
**Ramshorn-Livingston Sanctuary**