



## Invasive Species Game

### Prep

This activity uses a familiar game, musical chairs, to illustrate how wildlife species compete for resources, and the impacts an introduced or invasive species can have on native species.

### Materials

- 6 Chairs (or some sort of place markers)
- 6 New England cottontail (NEC) necklaces
- 6 Eastern cottontail necklaces
- Music of choice

\* Cottontail necklaces are included in the Home Sweet Habitat bin. Templates are also provided here to print and create your own.

### How to:

- Set up 6 chairs, back to back by twos:

1	2	3
4	5	6

- Choose 6 Students to be New England cottontails. Give them NEC necklaces and explain that these are native species, they belong here.
- Play one round of musical chairs. Once music has stopped, all the NECs should have seats. Explain to the class that this is how an ecosystem should function with its native species. There is enough space and resources for all of the animals to survive. But... Sometimes animals get introduced from another location. These are called non-native species. These animals can be introduced by accident, like rats on ships, or on purpose like the case with Eastern cottontails, introduced for hunting stock. Non-native species sometimes don't have much of an impact, but sometimes they can become invasive. Let's see what happens when we introduce a non-native animal to our ecosystem.
- Choose one student to be an Eastern cottontail. Give him/her an Eastern cottontail necklace.
- Play another round. One student should be knocked out (usually a NEC); they have not survived. Continue introducing one new Eastern cottontail for each round you play until there is only one NEC left.
- Ask the students that were NECs how they felt when they were kicked out of their habitat. One NEC survived; ask if they had to fight really hard to keep their spot. This is exactly what is happening with our native NEC. Eastern cottontails are taking over their space and resources, making it difficult for them to survive.
- By creating new habitat and introducing more NECs into the ecosystem we hope that they will be able to find new homes and be able to build up their population!



*Invasive Species*



Eastern  
Cottontail

*Native Species*



New England  
Cottontail