



Migration Madness

Prep

This game demonstrates the importance of habitat connectivity for migrating birds. When birds migrate, they need resting places (called staging sites) to stop and refuel for the next leg of their journey. This game can be modified for any group of migratory birds. For example, the hoops could represent patches of forest for songbirds as they make their way from Rhode Island to South American rainforest each fall, or wetlands and coastal areas for migrating waterfowl.

Give a brief overview of migration and why birds need to stage during migration before beginning. Ask students if they think they could hike from Rhode Island to Florida in one day. What would they have to do to make that journey on foot? They would probably need to rest, sleep, and eat. It would take them a lot longer than one day to get to their destination! That is exactly what birds have to do on their long migration journeys.

Materials

- 10 - 12 hula hoops or floor spots (You could also draw circles with sidewalk chalk.)

How to

Place 7 to 10 hula hoops in a straight line about 6 inches apart. Have the class line up on one end. Explain to students that they are migrating shorebirds spending the winters in and along the coastal wetlands of Central and South America. It's springtime, which means it is time to make the long journey to Rhode Island for the summer. Explain that the hula hoops are habitat patches where the birds can stop to rest. Students must hop (with two feet) from hula hoop to hula hoop until they reach Rhode Island (no running starts), then return to the end of the line. *Make sure the first student reaches "Rhode Island" before the next begins.* Once they reach Rhode Island, the birds can fly around, look for food, or build a nest!

Round One

Have the entire class go through, then ask was that easy or hard (should be easy). That's great! All of the birds have survived!

Round Two

But now, someone has decided to build lots of houses right along a saltmarsh (take away one hoop), so this year you will have to skip that one to make it back to Rhode Island! Go through the line again, some students won't make it. Tell them to wait on the side. Ask again, was that easy or hard (you should get a mixed response or maybe still too easy). Oh no! Some of our birds didn't make it!

Round Three

This year someone dumped chemicals and polluted one of the stopover sites where the birds rest on their way to Rhode Island. The pollution has severely affected the food sources that the birds need to refuel. (Take away the hoop that is right next to the first gap.) Let's see if our birds can make it this year. Most likely no students will make the jump (maybe one very athletic one!) Ask again, was that easy or hard? (Most might say impossible.) How did that make you feel? Explain that this is exactly how real birds feel, it is impossible for them to make it on their migration if there is nowhere for them to rest. Ask students if there is anything they could do to make it better?

Round Four

If time allows, explain that a group of people came along and decided to restore the habitat, maybe not in the same location but somewhere between where the last 2 habitats disappeared (Place a hoop back in the middle of the gap). Have all of the students go through again, most everyone should make it. Explain that it is possible to restore habitat for wildlife and this is one huge way we can help!

Wrap Up

Why is it important to protect not just the breeding and winter habitats of birds, but all the places they stop in between? Why do birds need to migrate? What are some of the ways humans can help? What are some of the ways YOU can help?