

Turtle Season: Hooray for Habitat!

✿ Hook: Four Seasons + One!

- Have students name the four seasons.
- Ask what it means when we refer to the Christmas, festive or holiday season.
- Ask them to name other seasons that some people recognize each year (e.g., strawberry, hunting, harvest).
- Talk about the special things that they do to celebrate the various seasons.
- Now, ask them to think about what the term **turtle season** means:

Basically, this is nesting season for turtles across most of North America. From May through June/July, female turtles travel from their home wetlands to find suitable nesting places for laying their eggs. Then they return to the pond for summer feeding, sun bathing, and hibernating once the weather gets cold. In the process, many of them must cross back-and-forth across busy roads – this is very dangerous. Thus, turtle season is the time of year when we are most likely to see increased numbers turtles near wetlands and forests.

✿ Hands-on Activity: Turtle Habitat

1. In preparation for this activity, review the *Ontario Turtles Info Sheet: The Importance of Turtles* to familiarize yourself with turtle habitats.
2. Provide each student with worksheet: *The Ideal Turtle Habitat*.
3. Ask children to use scissors to cut items from right side of worksheet.
4. Then instruct children to use the dashed outlines to correctly position these elements on the picture on left side of page.
5. With the teacher's approval, children should then glue and label the elements in place.
6. Ask students to explain why these natural elements are important to turtle survival. Depending on grade level, this can be oral or written.



Age Range: 5 to 8 years

Time: Two 60-minute periods

Themes: Importance of habitat protection and conservation in protecting turtle species-at-risk.

Resources:

- class set of worksheets *The Ideal Turtle Habitat*
- *A Year-in-the-Life of a Turtle* script for the teacher
- scissors
- pencils
- glue
- space for role-play (preferably outdoors).

Optional:

- CD or cassette of nature sounds
- life-size turtle models
- turtle ID cards
- props for parade

For Extension:

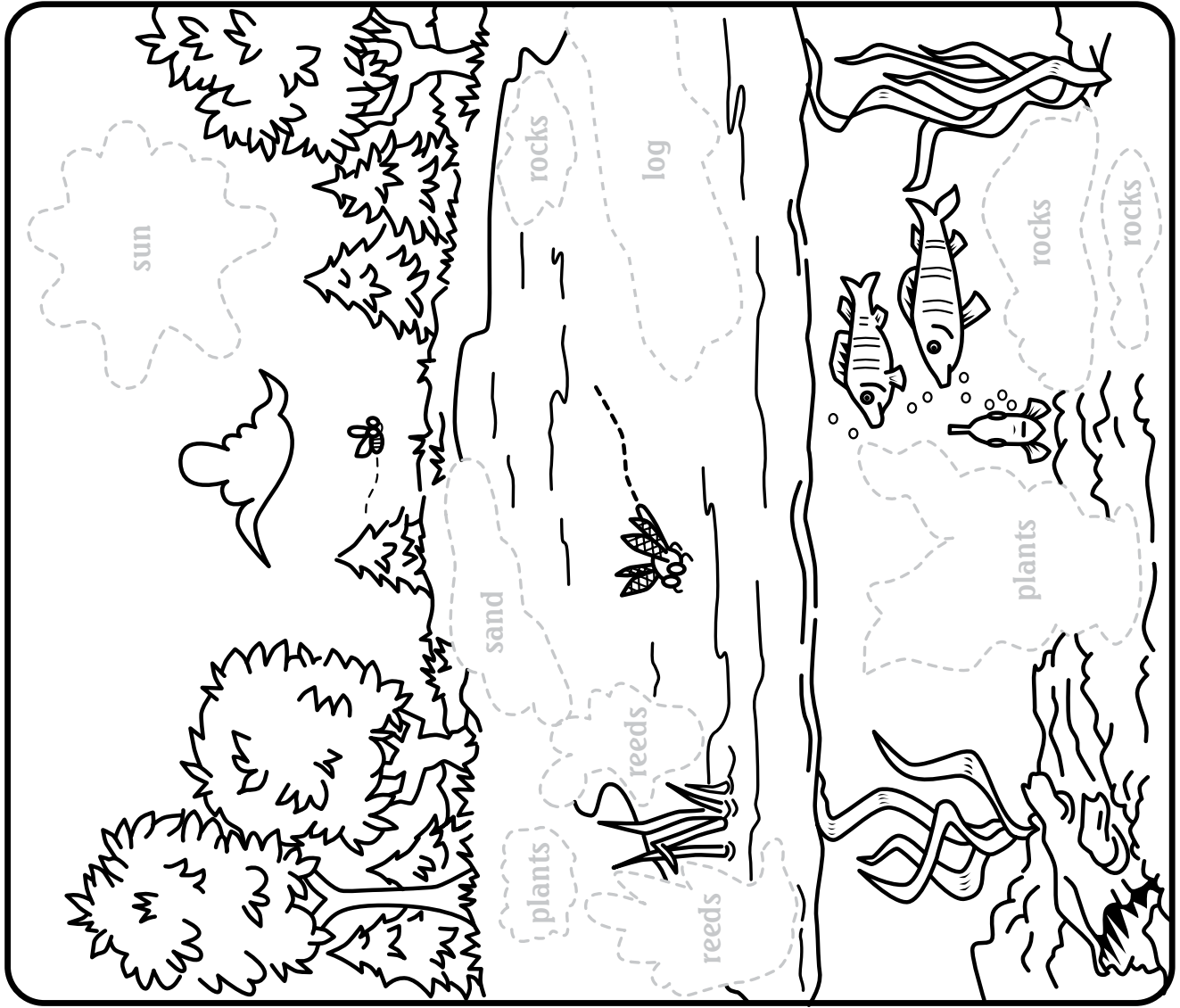
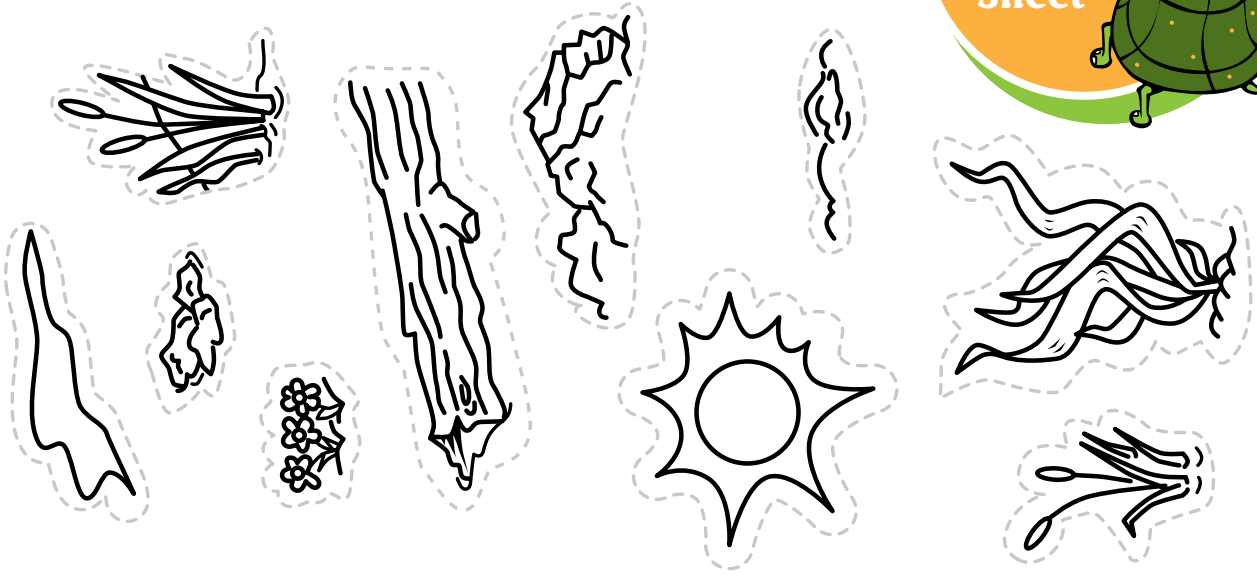
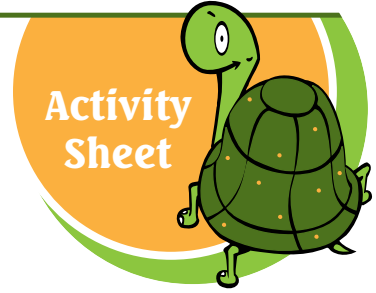
- computer lab loaded with Adobe Flash Player

Learning Outcome:

Students investigate the importance of habitat in survival and protection of turtle species-at-risk.



The Ideal Turtle Habitat



Name: _____

Role-Play Activity: A Year In the Life of a Turtle

1. Clear an area – preferably outside – where participants can act out the script.
If inside, accompany the activity with recorded nature sounds when possible.
2. Explain to the students they are now going to use their imaginations and understanding of turtle habitat, to act out a year in the life of an adult female turtle.
3. Read the script aloud, pausing to allow the students to act out their roles.

Script: A Year-in-the-Life of a Turtle

Everyone will crouch down in a ball and be very still.
We should close our eyes tight. Shhh...
It is winter. Above us the quiet earth is covered in ice and snow.
We are turtles, hibernating down in the mud below frigid water and ice on the pond.
Our hearts beat very, very slowly.
Blood flows slowly through our bodies.
We hardly breathe.
We do not move.



Wait! What's that sound?
The chirping birds tell us it is spring!
The ice is melting from the pond and the water is getting warmer.
We very slowly burrow out of the mud.
(Participants on knees/stomachs slowly move their arms and legs)
Our limbs are very stiff, and they move slowly in the cold water.
We slowly swim to the surface *(point bodies upward)*.
When we poke our heads above the water, we see a log.
We swim slowly over to the floating log and climb onto it.



We all turn to face the sun!
Now we stretch our limbs to absorb as much heat as we can.
As the sun moves across the sky, we shift our positions to get more heat.
Our bodies get warmer each day as summer comes.
Our blood flows more quickly.
All this activity is making us hungry!
Suddenly, we see a bug swimming across the water.
We swim quickly towards it and snap our beaks, trapping it and swallowing it.
Ummmm... Delicious!



Now it's time to find a good place to lay our eggs.
As female turtles we must leave our sunny log.
We must leave behind our pond.
But be careful.
This can be a very scary and dangerous time.
It means we have to cross the road.
Watch out! Cars are zipping by so fast.
We could be crushed!





Ahh... a quiet place at last.
The earth is soft here.
Loose ground that we can dig into.
We each make a nice round nest.
Then we back in, and lay our eggs.
We cover the nest, then sit quietly for a minute.
We hope that this is a safe place to leave our babies.
But now it's time for us to return to the pond.



It's a scary journey home.
We must cross the road again.
The cars are coming fast!
Many turtles have been killed on this road.
We are lucky to make it across.
And finally we are back in our pond.
Where we swim to our favourite log.
And sit in the sun.



Soon the days are getting cooler.
The sun moves further away.
We are getting cold.
The leaves fall off the trees.
It's time to find a safe place for winter.
We slip off the log, into the pond.
Down we go to the very bottom.



We crawl down into the mud.
We tuck our limbs, head and tail into our shell.
Our heartbeat slows down.
Soon snow covers the ground, and the pond freezes over.
We hardly breathe.
We will rest here until spring.
We do not move.
Shhh...

Parade: Hail to the Turtle!

Provide balloons and streamers to the children. If you wish, make some posters promoting Turtle Season, Save Our Turtles and Turtle Crossing messages. Add a few musical instruments, or simple props and costumes. Have the class parade around the school or through a local park in celebration of the season!

Extension

Students can go online to learn more about the challenges turtles face in their lifecycle by playing the interactive game: **Survivor Turtle – The 1% Challenge**.
<http://www.bonnecherepark.on.ca/html/programs/resources-turtles.html>

