

OUTDOOR LEARNING LESSON PLAN

W-HOO EATS W-HOO?

Objective: Students learn about food chains and how they can be imbalanced by human impacts, using the example of a local species at risk, the Burrowing Owl.

Curriculum: This exercise can be adapted for grades 2-6. See cpawsemb.org/curriculum-connections for Manitoba curriculum connections.

Learning Goals:

- Students understand the interactions between living things in the context of food chains
- Students understand how humans impact other living things in their environment
- Students use critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Students will be able to use scientific vocabulary to describe observations

Resources:

- [Manitoba's Species at Risk - Burrowing Owl](#)
- [Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program](#)
- Video: [A Few Minutes with the Burrowing Owls](#)
- Webinar: [The Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program](#)
- Video: [What Is A Food Chain? | The Dr. Binocs Show](#)
- [What is a food chain?](#)
- [Government of Manitoba Food Chains Lesson Plan](#)
- [Grasslands](#)

Materials:

- ~50 Popsicle sticks (~25 red and ~25 green); you may need more or less depending on your classroom size

Time: 20 minutes+

Activate:

1. Introduce the boreal forest in the context of science and/or social studies curriculum; see cpawsemb.org/outdoor-learning-program/boreal-forest/ for resources
2. Introduce students to food chains and endangered species (burrowing owls)

Acquire:

3. Take students outside to role play the following three part activity:

Part One

- In this activity, some students will be burrowing owls and others will be grasshoppers.
- All grasshoppers need to go out and eat as much grass as they can. On the mark “go,” the grasshoppers must get as much grass (popsicle sticks) as they can. Grasshoppers get a head start on the owls.
- Release the owls! Owls get to tag grasshoppers. You can have grasshoppers give up one popsicle stick after being tagged.
- If grasshoppers have no more popsicle sticks then they sit out.

Part Two

- Add a bunch of red (pesticide grass) popsicle sticks into the game.
- Once grasshoppers and owls have picked up some red popsicle sticks, yell “freeze.”
- Have grasshoppers check if they have a poisonous piece of grass. If yes, they act out a dramatic death. Those with the red sticks immediately sit out.

Apply:

4. Have students play a couple of rounds of the game (part one and part two), and let them switch between the role of owl and grasshopper. Afterwards, lead students through a discussion in part three. This is an opportunity to tie everything together. This activity shows students how everything in our environment is connected, and if creatures are unable to meet their basic needs, then we lose them from the ecosystem. This results in the food chain becoming unbalanced.

Part Three

- How does the grass with pesticides affect our burrowing owls?
- What is happening to our burrowing owls in Manitoba?
- How can we protect the burrowing owls’ homes?
- What can we do in place of using pesticides in the environment?
- How else can we help our burrowing owls?

Conclusion: Evaluate students based on their participation in the game and discussion. For extended learning, have students work on a burrowing owls classroom research project to create awareness for the Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program at their school.