

Leafy Spurge Activities

No Home on the Range: Play “Migration Headache”  
Play Audio Track #5  
(20 minutes)

Levels  
Grades 4-8

Subjects  
Science, Geography, Language Arts, Performing Art

Skills  
Planning, Showing, Predicting, Interpreting, Role Playing

Concepts  
Structure and functions of living things; interactions among technology, science and society

Objectives  
Students will learn how invasive weeds can displace forage for migrating animals such as elk.  
Students will understand how noxious weeds impact habitat: water, forage, and protective cover.

Materials (21 student class-size)  
What’s in Your World? CD audio track #5 (inside the back cover) - 1 per class  
20 paper plates (10 labeled for summer range and 10 labeled for winter range) playing field

Time Considerations  
Preparation - 5 minutes  
Activity - 20 minutes

Lesson Overview  
• Investigating the Senses and Acting (20 minutes)

Background  
The primary threat to elk survival is the disappearance and degradation of habitat. Many wildlife species lose necessary forage and shelter to weed impacts. *Can you name some migrating animals?*  
The migration routes of North American Elk are known as summer and winter habitat. Summer habitat is typically higher fertile hillsides near creeks and Forest. Winter habitat is valley’s where grasses are prevalent.  
Today, the elk’s journeys cross with human influences like hundreds of small acreage homesteads where large farmlands once filled the landscape. Agriculture, development, and industry contribute to noxious weed spread and its subsequent impact on habitat for migrating animals.  
*Where do elk find food and shelter?*

NO HOME ON THE RANGE LESSON DETAILS

STEP ONE. Select a large playing field about 70 to 90 feet in length. For twenty-one students, count out one plate for each group of 3 students who stand at the end of the playing field (7 wintering and 7 summering habitat-labeled plates). Designate two sections of the playing field, one as wintering habitat and the other as summering habitat and place the similarly labeled plates in a pile, one pile in each designated habitat area on the playing field. Tell the students that they each represent Elk and will migrate between the two designated areas at your signal. Explain that the paper plates represent habitat (food, water, protective cover).

STEP TWO. Tell the students that surviving is the goal. In order to survive they must have one foot on a paper plate. If they cannot get their foot on the plate, they did not find suitable habitat and “die” (temporarily moving to the sidelines to watch the others as they continue playing). During the migration, the Elk may want to “walk on 4 legs” like elk. To play the game, tell the students, “*Three Elk can survive a “habitat haven” and no others at any one time.*”

STEP THREE. Explain factors that limit elk migration survival: changes in the wintering and calving habitats; times of abundant food, water, shelter, and space suitably arranged; times when the habitat is stressed; or the area size of available habitat is reduced.

Begin playing “*Migrating Headache*”. Locate all 21 students at the *wintering* habitat site. Announce the start of the *first migration* to the *summering* habitat site. All movement is slow motion (no running). Everyone successfully migrates during the first try--successful summer season. Remove one plate from the *wintering* habitat pile. Tell the students that *noxious weeds (name a local weed) have invaded!*

Announce the start of the *second migration* to the *wintering* habitat. Three students will be left without a plate for their foot and will be moved to the sidelines. *Three Elk “died” as a result of loss of habitat!*” Tell the students that deceased Elk will have an opportunity to get back into the activity as surviving calves when favorable conditions prevail and there is habitat available in the *summering* habitat. Remove 4 plates in the *summering* habitat to represent a loss.