



Comparing Hares and Rabbits



Grade 6 Activity

General Description

Students have surely already seen a rabbit or a hare, whether in the wild or as a pet. But can they tell the two apart? Have they heard of the lagomorphs of Canada?

In this activity, students will compare two members of the Order Lagomorpha, the Arctic hare and the snowshoe hare, as well as the two major groups which make up the order, hares and rabbits.

Duration

Approximately 45 minutes, not counting student work time.

Preparation

Before conducting this activity in the classroom, you will need to explore the Web site [Ukaliq: The Arctic Hare](http://nature.ca/ukaliq) (<http://nature.ca/ukaliq>) and read the sections relating to the activity: Characteristics, Habitat, Range, Eat and Be Eaten, Breeding Behaviour, Life Cycle, Naming & Classifying.

Required Materials

- computer with Internet access
- paper and pencils

Objectives

Students will:

- ask themselves about the differences among the Arctic hare, the snowshoe hare and the cottontail rabbit
- use the Internet to find more information on these animals
- suggest hypotheses to explain the resemblances among animals that live in very different habitats.

Link with the Common Framework of Science Learning Outcomes

- 301-15 -- Compare the adaptations of closely related animals living in different parts of the world and discuss reasons for any differences.

Links with Other Subjects

- Language
- Social Studies (Geography)



Introduction

Start by writing the words rabbit and hare on the chalkboard and ask students to describe the differences between the two. They may think it is the same kind of animal. They may also know the difference between the two. Write down what they know on the board. Then, summarize what has been said and ask them to write their general knowledge of the subject on a piece of paper.

Note: Do not give the answers immediately.

Now, write Arctic hare and snowshoe hare on the board. Following the same idea, ask the students what they know about these two mammals and write their answers on the board. Then, summarize what has been said and ask them once again to write their general knowledge of the subject on a piece of paper.

Note: Do not give the answers immediately.

Development

Now take the students to the Web site Ukaliq: The Arctic Hare so that they can broaden their knowledge of the differences and similarities among the two hare species and the rabbits. Mention that they can also go to other sites, but that they must first find answers on the Ukaliq site. Ask them to find information on the colour, size, weight, physical features, habitat, behaviour, young and food of the two hares and the cottontail rabbit.

Conclusion

To wind things up, lead students into a discussion on species that have similar characteristics, but live in different places (e.g. Arctic vs. South America). Help them suggest hypotheses to explain these similarities (e.g. because they eat the same things). The following are some examples of questions that could be used as a springboard for discussion:

- Why do the eastern tarsier (<http://www.nature.ca/notebooks/english/estars.htm>) and the northern flying squirrel (<http://www.nature.ca/notebooks/english/flysquir.htm>) have big eyes?
- Why do European species in general resemble similar Canadian species?

Suggestions for Student Work

Students present the results of their research in tables. These two tables, one comparing rabbits and hares, the other comparing the Arctic hare and the snowshoe hare, should contain the following information: colour, size, weight, physical features, habitat, behaviour, young and food.

Expanding the Lesson

Students compare the Arctic hare to another lagomorph (e.g. the pika) or to a member of the order Rodentia (rodents).