



Lesson 3: Helping Herps

Theme

Herps are important for both their intrinsic and instrumental values but they face many threats due to human impacts, therefore we must help protect them.

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will learn about threats to herps and the actions we all can take to help our reptiles and amphibians in Rhode Island.

Corresponding Activities for this Lesson

- Slink and Think Gallery Walk

Materials

- Lesson 3 PowerPoint
- Large pieces of paper
- Markers

Lesson

1. Create a gallery walk using the “Slink and Think” activity. Discuss value of reptiles and amphibians to humans and the environment.

2. Define intrinsic and instrumental values, as well as the differences and similarities between the two.

- Intrinsic value is the importance that something has, simply because it exists (ex. It is beautiful, different, cool, etc.)
- Instrumental value is the importance it has because of its usefulness (ex. It is a food source, it is a building material, it controls pests, etc.)

3. Ask students if they can think of some threats that herps face.

- *Habitat degradation:* Pristine habitats are being polluted by toxins and pesticides.
- *Habitat Fragmentation:* Herp habitat is being split into tiny pieces by roads and other human development. For example, if someone built a road between your bed and your refrigerator, what would you do? How would you eat? Would you risk crossing the road? This is the dilemma that reptiles and amphibians face.
- *Disease:* Herp populations are disappearing due to ranavirus, chytrid fungus and other diseases. Details about each disease are provided in the notes section of the Lesson 3 PowerPoint.

4. Explain to students that the RIDEM Division of Fish and Wildlife is helping by conserving big chunks of habitat in our Wildlife Management Areas where no one is allowed to develop the land for buildings or roads.

- Wildlife Management Areas provide a safe place so that animals, like herps, don't have to worry about pollution or crossing roads.
- The Division of Fish and Wildlife also is looking outside of the protected habitats to see where animals need to cross roads most frequently. By identifying these dangerous locations, they can make tunnels under the road to make it safer for herps to get from one piece of habitat to another.

5. Explain to students that habitats can also be created or restored, like during "Operation Spadefoot!" *Details about this collaborative project are provided in the notes section of the Lesson 3 PowerPoint.*

6. Ask students what they think everyone can do to help protect herp habitat.

- Don't litter
- Clean up wetlands
- Help and encourage wetland protection
- Plant native species
- Don't use pesticides
- Share your knowledge!