

Relay game to illustrate ecosystem services and human impact

Overview

- Two teams of 5-10 players each
- Game set up as an 'egg and spoon' style relay race where children represent species in an ecosystem, and have to complete a relay race to carry an object (representing an ecosystem service) to the finish line, where it is presented to humans (and so the ecosystem service is provided to humans).

Materials

- Headbands (2 sets)
- 2 x spoons
- 2 x beanbags/balls (to place on top of spoons)
- 10 x blindfolds

How it works

- Two teams (5-10 players each) compete in relay races to deliver 'ecosystem services' (represented by balls/beanbags balanced on top of a spoon) to 'humans' at the finish line.
- Children will wear a headband with a species image on; these do not represent a food chain but rather the diversity of flora and fauna in the ecosystem.
- Round 1:
 - Two teams compete as usual, standing spaced out from one another in a line, carrying the egg and spoon in a relay fashion to the finish line – the first team to reach the finish line and place their ecosystem services in the hands of the person waiting at the end of the line wins a point.
- Round 2:
 - In round 2, the ecosystems suffer different disturbances.
 - Team 1 suffers a decline in reptile populations – to represent this, the players with reptile headbands (ie. lizard and tortoise) must complete the relay on one leg (ie. hopping), slowing them down and making it more likely they will drop the beanbag.
 - Team 2 suffers a decline in insect populations – to represent this, the players with insect headbands must complete the relay on one leg (ie. hopping), slowing them down and making it more likely they will drop the beanbag.
 - The first team to reach the finish line and place their ecosystem services in the hands of the person waiting at the end of the line wins a point.
- Round 3:
 - In round 3, the ecosystems suffer the same disturbance.
 - Both teams suffer habitat loss – to represent this, half of the players in each race must compete blindfolded (using a cloth tied around their head; total of 10 blindfolds needed).
 - The first team to reach the finish line and place their ecosystem services in the hands of the person waiting at the end of the line wins a point.

What the game represents

- In round 1, both ecosystems are functioning well and so can deliver ecosystem services fast and efficiently to humans.
- The subsequent rounds illustrate how disturbances to ecosystems can inhibit ecosystem service provision.