

HABITAT COMPETITION FOR KIDS — Kids, do you love living in the Tucson Mountains where there are lots of wild places and lots of interesting plants and animals? If so, enter the habitat competition. You can win a nice certificate that says how good you are to nature.

To enter the competition, you can take some photos or write something about how you help nature in the Tucson Mountains. If you take photos, write a sentence or two about each photo telling us what it shows.

There are two categories for kids:

- A. How you help preserve habitat.
- B. How you help restore habitat.

Entries will be judged by age: 8 and younger, 9 to 12, 13 to 15, and 15 to 18. You can only enter one age group, but you can enter categories A or B or both. Your entry should be completed over the school summer vacation and sent to us by email as a zip file at TMA@TucsonMountainsAssoc.org. If you have any questions, email the president, Peter Chesson, at pchesson@u.arizona.edu.

What is a habitat?

It is a place where a wild animal or plant or fungus can live.

Habitats can be big or small. A habitat for an insect or scorpion or spider or worm, might just a small part of your yard where it can hide and find food. For a deer or mountain lion, it is much bigger because they travel over large areas seeking food and places to hide. Birds move a lot too. Often they live only part of the year in Tucson, but there might be special places in your yard where birds like to nest. That is their nesting habitat.

Because plants do not move from place to place after they have started growing, a habitat for a plant might also be just part of your yard with the right soil and sunshine that you can protect to make safe for that plant. But think about the seeds of the plant. The plant will eventually die. Where are there safe places for the seeds of that plant to germinate grow into a new plant?

What to include in your kids entry

Tell us your age, and which categories (A, B or both) you are entering.

For category A, explain to us with words or pictures at least one of the following:

(a) How you learn about habitats by watching wildlife, studying native plants, taking photographs of nature, and from nature books, magazines and electronic media.

(b) How you educate others including other children, your parents and neighbors about the need to preserve habitat by talking to them, showing them pictures, taking them on hikes in nature, and explaining the importance of preserving habitat and how to do it.

(c) How you respect nature by avoiding trampling plants, staying on trails and roads when you hike, being careful not to scare wild animals when you see them, keeping wild animals safe by preventing your dogs and cats from roaming free in wild places. How you explain to others the need to behave properly in nature.

(d) How you help provide safe places at your own home for nature by keeping the native plants there, not trampling them, keeping rocks in place and letting fallen branches remain. How you let the wild animals live there, and keep pets away so they do not chase or kill wild animals.

Remember that you only need to tell us about one of (a) to (d) to enter, but the more you tell us, the more likely you are to win.

For category B, explain to us with words or pictures at least one of the following:

(a) How you help grow native plants from seed or cuttings from native vegetation at or near your home in places that have been disturbed at your home.

(b) How you help landscape your home with native plants, rocks and branches for wildlife to use.

(c) How you help keep people and pets off the areas that you are restoring.

(d) How you explain to others the value of restoring habitat, and how to do it.

(e) How you learn about the needs of wild animals and native plants so that you can restore habitat appropriately or explain to others how they can do it.

Remember that you only need to tell us about one of (a) to (e) to enter, but the more you tell us, the more likely you are to win.