



AXOLOTL HABITATS

Restore the wild! Explore unique axolotl characteristics and design a habitat for this endangered species.

MATERIALS:

- Axolotl figurine
- Construction paper
- Craft foam
- Craft sticks
- Felt
- Glue
- Markers
- Pipe cleaners
- Pom poms
- Scissors
- Small empty box

TEKS:

SCI 4/5.4 A: The student is expected to explain how scientific discoveries and innovative solutions to problems impact science and society.

SCI 5.12 C: The student is expected to describe a healthy ecosystem and how human activities can be beneficial or harmful to an ecosystem.

SCI 5.13 A: The student is expected to analyze the structures and functions of different species to identify how organisms survive in the same environment.

HOW TO:

1. In this activity, you will channel your inner restoration ecologist to design and build a habitat for an endangered species called an axolotl. Read the STEM Explanation to learn more about this special creature.





2. Once you've learned about axolotls, think about the type of place an axolotl might like to live in the wild. Some questions to consider:

- What type of environment would make an axolotl feel happy and safe?
- Where does your axolotl get food? What about water?
- What type of shelter does your axolotl have access to for safety?
- Will the axolotl have enough space?

3. Take out the empty box. This will act as your habitat's base.

4. Get creative and use assorted craft supplies to build an ideal habitat for your axolotl inside the empty box.

5. Once you've added all of the habitat components, place the tiny axolotl figurine safely into its new habitat!

STEM EXPLANATION:

All about axolotls! **Axolotls** are unique, aquatic creatures that look like little salamanders with gills sticking out of their heads. Axolotls have some very special **adaptations**, or things that help them survive in the wild:

- Axolotls are famous for their ability to regenerate body parts, such as their tails, limbs, and even parts of their hearts and brains!
- Unlike other amphibians, axolotls keep their aquatic features and are the only species of salamander that spend their entire life in the water.
- Axolotls are not picky eaters, and they eat fish, worms, and other small water creatures. They use their sharp teeth to grasp onto food.
- Axolotls have a unique appearance with a permanent smile on their face!

Axolotls have very specific habitat needs! They are native to central Mexico, in the lake system/canals of Xochimilco. Unfortunately, they are losing their natural habitat due to the draining of canals and pollution. This has caused axolotls to become endangered.

An **endangered species** is a type of plant or animal that is at risk of becoming extinct, or completely disappearing, in the near future. One way to help endangered species, like axolotls, is to preserve and restore their native habitats. Or to even construct ideal habitats for these animals to live long, happy lives in!

A **habitat** is the natural home or environment of a plant, animal, or other organism. It provides the organisms that live there with food, water, shelter, and space to survive.

Keep reading to learn more about the type of habitat axolotls need to thrive!

Each species has unique needs for survival, and they look for places that provide food, water, and shelter. Think about these different habitat considerations:

- **Food:** From delicious fish to crunchy bugs to green leaves, animals must make sure that their habitat has a reliable food source nearby.
- **Weather:** Weather and climate are very important considerations for animals. Some animals love the warmth of the sun, while others prefer the cool shade.
- **Safety:** Animals look for habitats where they can avoid predators and raise their animal families in peace.
- **Special adaptations:** Fish can swim fast through the ocean and monkeys can swing through the trees of a jungle! An animal’s ideal habitat lets them use their abilities.

Axolotls have unique habitat needs, requiring cool, oxygen-rich water with plenty of hiding spots like aquatic plants and rocks, along with low-light conditions to feel secure.

- **Space:** Axolotls require large aquatic habitats with lots of room for swimming and hiding.
- **Shelter:** Axolotls seek shelter among aquatic plants, rocks, and submerged debris to hide from predators and rest during the day.
- **Water:** Axolotls absorb oxygen through their skin and gills and require clean, oxygen-rich water to thrive.
- **Food:** Axolotls eat small prey such as worms, insects, small fish, and aquatic invertebrates, which they hunt using their sharp teeth and a suction-feeding technique.

Now, head back to step 2 to design your very own axolotl habitat!

CAREER: RESTORATION ECOLOGIST

Restoration ecologists work to heal and protect nature, helping habitats like wetlands and forests stay healthy.



MEET KELLYN LACOUR-CONANT!

Kellyn is a restoration ecologist dedicated to healing the environment. She works to restore Louisiana’s coastal wetlands through projects that restore native vegetation and oyster reef ecosystems. Kellyn is proud of the work she does to engage volunteers, protect future generations from environmental hazards, and uplift communities on the frontlines of coastal land loss and climate change.



Learn more about Kellyn!

RESOURCES

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/amphibians/facts/mexican-axolotl>
www.ifthencollection.org/