

Roots & Shoots Community Survey

EcoTeam Lesson 7: Environmental Citizens



Time needed
50 minutes

Cost
None

Weather requirements
None

Advance preparation
None

Overview

Students have identified attributes of an environmental citizen in the final EcoTeam lesson. In this Roots & Shoots activity, students will complete an evaluation of their community and identify other projects they would like to complete that show care and concern for the environment, animals and the human community.

Background Information for Facilitator

Community service projects are the foundation of the Roots & Shoots program. The Roots & Shoots framework for developing projects is knowledge - compassion - action. Knowledge, as introduced in the EcoTeam lessons, is the base upon which everything else rests. If you want to make a difference, you must always strive for accurate information. Compassion--a deep awareness of the suffering of others coupled with the wish to relieve it-- leads to the focus of projects. Action is the end result that makes a positive impact on our community and world. The framework is not a one-way path-- as compassion can certainly drive a quest for knowledge.

Dr. Goodall's experiences provide a model for the path from knowledge to compassion to action. From her years living with the chimpanzees in Tanzania, she developed a strong sense of compassion. The chimpanzees were like a family to her, and she could not continue living in the forests when chimp populations and habitats were being destroyed throughout Africa. Compassion led her to take action, and she now travels over 300 days a year -- from Africa, to Europe, Asia, North America and beyond. She gives public speeches, answers questions, gives news and radio interviews, writes books, and inspires young people and adults alike.

Let the Roots & Shoots activities you have completed as part of EcoTeam serve as examples for developing future projects. Students will see how community service projects flow out of their studies and how to put their knowledge to use to make a positive difference in their communities and world.

Materials

Large sheet of paper to record project ideas

Procedures

Pass out student journal pages. Instruct students to complete the Community Survey journal page and give them adequate time to do so. This Community Survey was adapted from a longer version that can be found in the Roots & Shoots Coordinator's Manual (titled *Community Evaluation Questions*). Go over their answers together and discuss. Some questions may lead directly to ideas for future Roots & Shoots projects. Write down students' ideas for future projects on a large sheet of paper (or the chalkboard if paper is not available). Please remind the classroom teacher that the class may register as a new Roots & Shoots group at <http://www.janegoodall.org>. Thank the students for their participation in the Roots & Shoots project(s) and for helping to make the world a better place for all living things!

Note: There is an alternate final activity (Roots & Shoots Evaluation & Planning) that can be used if the students have completed several Roots & Shoots activities as part of EcoTeam.

3. Do you notice any stray animals in your area? Do people have problems with wildlife in your area?

4. Are plants in your area affected by human or animal activity?

Human Community

1. What do you like most about living in your area?

2. What do you like least about living in your area?

3. Are there any people in your community who have a difficult time living? What are some of the reasons for these difficulties?

Bringing it Together

Think about the most important problems facing the environment, animals and people in your community. What would you like to do for a future Roots & Shoots project?

Plants

1. What are the common plants growing in your area? (You can make a leaf collection or sketch different plants in your journal, or find a plant guide for your area to look up unfamiliar species.)
2. Are the plants affected at all by human or animal activity? How? Is the effect positive or negative?
3. Are there nonnative species of plants that humans have brought to your community? Are these plants helping or harming your local environment?
4. Are there any rare, threatened or endangered plant species living in your area? (You may need to research this question at the local library or by calling a biology professor at a nearby university or by looking on the Internet at <http://endangered.fws.gov>, or www.rbg.ca/cbcn/plants1.html in Canada.)

Animals

1. What are the common animals found in your neighborhood? (Make a separate list for birds, reptiles, insects, amphibians, mammals, fish and other groups. Sketch your favorite animals in a notebook.) Even if you live in a city, there are hundreds of animals living near your home...look for small mammals, birds and insects.
2. How do the animals and humans in your community interact? Is the interaction positive or negative? In what way?
3. Do you have animals living with you at home? What kinds? Are they pets or are they involved in a family business (farming)?
4. Are there any rare, threatened or endangered animal species living in your community? (You may need to research this question at the local library or by calling a biology professor at a nearby university or by looking on the Internet at <http://endangered.fws.gov> or www.animalsindanger.com/animals_canada.html.)
5. Is there a high or low diversity of animal species in your area? (Diversity is the number of different kinds of species living in one place.)

Human Community

1. What do you like most about living in your community?
2. What do you like least?
3. What, in your opinion, are the top 10 problems for the people in your community?
4. Do any of these problems concern the relationship between humans and nature? If not, are there any major problems with the interactions between humans and the plants, animals and environment in your community?
5. What are your biggest hopes for your community?

6. Are there any groups of people in your community who have a difficult time living? What are some of the reasons for these difficulties?

Synthesis: Bringing it Together

1. Based on all of this information, what do you think the five most important issues are facing the environment, animals and humans in your community?

2. Can you trace the sources of these problems? What are they and why are they occurring? Are the problems caused by the pursuit of a specific goal—for example, satisfying basic needs or generating income—or do they arise from a lack of information or communication?

3. As Roots & Shoots members and community members, what is your connection to these problems?

4. How aware of these problems are people? Are they recognized as problems in the community or school? Are people concerned?

5. What are the biggest consequences of these problems?

6. Can you think of any solutions to these problems? If so, why are these solutions *not* being implemented now?

7. What resources would you need (equipment, funding, information, transportation, time) to carry out some of these solutions?

8. If you propose a solution, how would it benefit the community? Are there community members who might not agree with this solution? If so, could you work out a compromise?