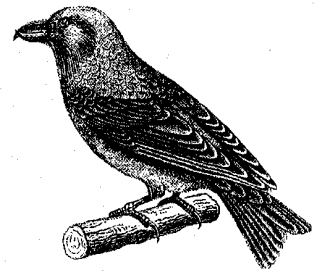
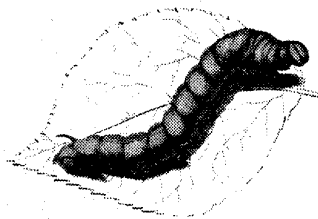


# Urban Habitat Reading



Inside an ecosystem, there can be many different habitats. A habitat is a place where a plant or animal lives and reproduces. That place has to have the right amount of sunlight and type of food that the plant or animal needs. It also must have enough water, air, and space, and the right kind of shelter.

A habitat can be as small as a few leaves on a plant for a caterpillar. Or it can be as big as a whole forest for a black bear, since a bear needs a lot of space to collect enough food to survive.



Some living things compete with other things to survive. Plants compete with other plants to survive. And animals compete with other animals to survive. They compete for the resources in their habitats: sunlight, food, space, water, shelter, and mates.

You might have seen pigeons fighting over a french fry, or a dog lifting its leg on a bush to mark its **territory**. Think about a male cardinal bird singing its head off to attract a female cardinal. Or how about a cat hissing and scratching until another

cat leaves its territory!

You probably haven't seen plants wrestling each other to the ground in a competition. But they compete in other ways. Some plants have bigger leaves or grow faster and taller to shade out a nearby plant. Some plants have root systems that spread out and take up more water from the soil than a plant with fewer roots. Some plants give off chemicals that keep other plants from growing nearby.

This competition in nature makes sure that the plants and animals best matched for their environment will reproduce and carry on the species. Some must die so that others survive. This allows those who live to be healthy enough to continue to reproduce. Plants and animals cannot survive for a long time outside of their own ecosystem or habitat.

## Twin Cities Habitat

The ecosystem of a city has many habitats inside of it. Animals might live in the same ecosystem, but they have different habitats. In a wetland ecosystem, a duck would have a different habitat than a fish. They both live in a wetland, but their needs are not the same. The same is true for people in a city ecosystem. People might live in

the same ecosystem – the Twin Cities – but their habitats, or their neighborhoods, are different.

Your habitat, for example, would be the area where you could take care of all your basic needs. Your basic needs are food, water, shelter, and space.

And, as in nature, people often compete for these resources. Maybe you have sat around a table with lots of hungry people. It's to your advantage to eat as fast as you can so you can get more food. All of us have probably grabbed for the last cookie (or the biggest one) at some point. We are consumers after all!

But people have put a "price" on resources that are available in our habitat. Food, water, shelter, and space all cost something. People place a price on resources because they are limited. Why are food, water, and shelter limited?

People don't just roam the wilderness of buildings and traffic and grocery stores. We aren't racing each other to be the first one to an apartment or house. We don't fight to get all the food in a grocery store! We also don't go to the edge of the Mississippi River and stoop down for a drink of water. That water has to be cleaned and pumped into our homes and schools. Therefore, we must pay money for it. People use money to buy food, water, shelter, and space.

