WEEKDAY WONDERS

Content developed by the Tennessee Aquarium Education Department

TENNESSEE AQUARIUM

Living Things and the Environment: Day 5

This week, Weekday Wonders will help young scientists explore ecosystems and the world around them. They will start by learning about living and nonliving things, then find out more about the needs of plants and animals. Toward the end of the week, young scientists will discover how plants and animals rely on each other and determine how the parts of an ecosystem share resources.

These curated activities are listed in a suggested sequence but may be done in the order that works best for you and your young scientists. Learn more about this series in the Introduction to Weekday Wonders.

Question of the Day

How do plants and animals share resources where they live?

Daily Nature Journal

Have your young scientist go outside to complete a daily entry in his or her nature journal. Use the Guide to Nature Journaling if you need a reminder on how scientists should complete the entry. Ask them what patterns they have been seeing throughout the week.

Family Resources

Ask your young scientists to draw or list all of the food and drinks that each person in your family has had in the last three days. Include any pets that live with you!

Have them compare the lists between family members. Ask them to consider the following questions.

- How many different types of food did each person have?
- Did everyone eat the same amounts of each food?
- Why does your scientist think different members of the family ate different things?

Nature Journal

Ask young scientists to take a slow walk through your backyard or along a safe street, and look for evidence that different types of animals are living in the same area. This might include two-legged animals (humans), too! Have your scientist keep a list of the different evidence they find. They can write or draw their list or share it with an adult to write for them.

Once your scientist has a list of evidence, have them choose one item, such as a tree or burrow, that they think more than one animal might use. Remember that living things need food, water, and shelter, so different animals might use the same item for different needs. If they did not find something that they think multiple animals use, have them take a look around again to look specifically for an item that fits that description.

Ask your scientist to draw a detailed picture of the item or area. On the picture, have your young scientist label the parts that might be used by different plants and animals, or help your younger scientist label them. Ask them how many different living things rely on the item they drew. Have them continue to observe over the next few days to look for animals using the area.

A Tangled Web

Young scientists should be discovering how many living things share resources. In this activity, they will have a chance to explore that idea further.

Write each of the following words on the top of small pieces of paper. Then, have your young scientist draw a picture of each. For the youngest scientists, only use List 1. For the older scientists, use the words in both List 1 and List 2.

List 1	**List 2**
Sun	Living leaf
Grass	Dead leaf
Tree	Rotting log
Flower	Earthworm
Ant	Bumblebee
Butterfly	Spider
Robin	Salamander
Mouse	Deer
Owl	Snake
Mushroom	Squirrel

Ask your scientists to create an ecosystem in an area of the house that has a number of chair legs or other furniture. To do this, they should place the sun in the middle of the room. Then they should place the other pictures randomly around the room.

Give your scientists a ball of yarn or twine and have them start at the sun, and then move to connect the different living things that depend on each other for food. They should connect them in order by wrapping the yarn around the legs of the chairs. For example, they might connect the sun to grass to mouse to owl. Have your scientists see how many different chains your scientist can create that all start from the sun. For older scientists, encourage them to do some research to find additional connections.