

Life in the Dunes

With some preparation beforehand, you can involve your group in a study of the various habitats that make up the dune ecosystem. Using a bed sheet attached to poles that can be anchored in the sand, draw a profile on the sheet representing the lakeshore, foredune, secondary dune, wetlands, and forested uplands of the back dune area. You can also create a profile on a blackboard or a long sheet of newsprint and do this activity before or after the visit to the dunes.

Using drawings or magazine pictures, have members of your class or group place the different elements of the dune system in their proper habitat on the dune profile. Attach the different dune components to the profile using either tape or Velcro. Be sure to include plants, animals, human activities, etc., and to put them in their proper places. You can discuss what is found in the different habitats and their roles in the food chain or web of life. You can also discuss what factors influence the formation and destruction of dunes (natural succession, the role of Lake Ontario, wind, water, human activities). Try to figure out which areas shown on the profile are, or are not suited for different activities such as conservation, development, and recreation.

You may want to contact shoreline landowners and local historical society personnel to create an oral history of the dune area. You can describe how the area has changed over time, the kinds of plants and animals, natural disasters, and past and present uses by people. You can use the information you have collected to create a time line to illustrate the dune area's history.

Another way to provide a record of the dune is to take a picture or video from the same spot at the same time each year. This could be done once a year on a particular date or once each season. By organizing or participating in a photography exhibit or a poster contest you can help to increase the awareness of this unique resource.



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