



# Protecting Habitats Protects Life

**EXHIBITION PROSPECTUS**



Smithsonian





Courtesy RT-Images

Courtesy parkUS4



*Habitat* is a highly flexible, scalable, build-it-yourself exhibition made available by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES).

# Protecting Habitats Protects Life



**Habitats provide homes for all living things, from the tiniest ant to the tallest tree.**

**Created by Smithsonian Gardens,** together with partners from across the Smithsonian, the *Habitat* exhibition explores the stories and science of habitats, and the plants, animals, and humans that call them home. The exhibition examines the critical need for diverse habitats, how interconnected and fragile habitats are, and what we can do to protect them.

With digital files to create engaging graphic panels, along with detailed plans to build 3-D elements, *Habitat* offers a fascinating layer of interpretation to the outdoor landscapes of museums, historic houses, botanical gardens, and other venues.

**Twelve thematic sections inspire and inform visitors on different aspects of habitats, focusing on topics such as trees, gardens, insects, wildlife, and conservation.**



Courtesy pakul54

# Exhibition at a Glance

## Contents:

- 49 fully designed, ready to print graphic panels and labels with images and text. Rail-style or low-profile panels populate 12 exhibition sections. If your space cannot accommodate all 12 sections, please contact SITES to discuss your layout.

- eight 60"W panels
- seventeen 48"W panels
- thirteen 36"W panels
- eleven 12"W panels

All panels are either 18" or 24" deep

- Fully designed, customizable templates ready for you to add or incorporate your own content
- Design drawings to build a broad array of physical components, including wildlife and insect sculptures and silhouettes, oversized birds' nests, insect "hotels," and a coral reef made with plants
- Recommendations for plants and landscaping

## Fee:

\$3,000 for two-year licensing period

## Bug B&B

**Insects are everywhere, and they need homes** just like us. The Bug B&Bs in this garden create a habitat for insects all year round.

### LOOK CLOSELY

#### Is There Anyone Home?

Take a closer look at the Bug B&Bs. Can you spot any signs of life?

RIGHT: Some beetles create tunnels, known as galleries, in dead trees, in which they feed and lay their eggs.  
Photograph by Jason Storch





## Why Make Room for Insects?

Insects can sometimes be pests, but they also help us in many ways.

Insects pollinate our crops and flowers, disperse seeds, and decompose dead materials to recycle nutrients back into the environment.

Insects are also a vital link in the food web. Many animals, from armadillos to woodpeckers, rely on insects as their main food source. Without insects, our ecosystem would cease to function.



ABOVE Eastern Hercules Beetle (*Dynastes titus*).  
Photograph by Krista Schults / CC BY 2.0.

LEFT Monarch butterfly (*Danous plexippus*) on a Tithonia flower.  
Photograph by James Ogilford, Smithsonian Gardens.

PILL LEFT Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*).  
Photograph by Krista Schults.



## Snug as a Bug

Homemade wooden structures provide insects with a place to nest, breed, raise their young, and overwinter. They can be filled with natural materials collected from local woodlands to mimic the forest floor.

ABOVE Leaf litter on the forest floor.  
Photograph by Carsten Vossler.



↑ Main section panel for “Bug B&B,” one of 49 ready-to-print graphic panels in *Habitat*

To license  
the exhibition:  
Ed Liskey  
liskeye@si.edu  
202-633-3142

**Habitat** is a digital, build-it-yourself exhibition, so there are no shipping fees. Venues will print graphics, build display structures physical components, and provide outdoor environments with appropriate plantings.

For content  
inquiries:  
Carol Bossert  
bossertc@si.edu  
202-633-2601





Courtesy of Hampton University Archives

## Sheltering Branches

**Trees can provide protective spaces.**

For example, the southern live oak, a long-lived tree with characteristic broad-spreading low branches, is an iconic symbol of safety and strength, and played an especially important role as an historic gathering place for African American communities.



Photograph by B. A. Bowen, distributed under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.



## Dead Wood is Life

**Standing dead trees and fallen debris provide microhabitats for a multitude of living organisms.** Dead wood is a fragile, crucial habitat, interconnected with sustainable ecosystems which need human protection.



## Life Underground

**Mushrooms play a critical role in thriving underground habitats.** Understanding the complex interconnections between species helps humans protect fragile habitats.



Courtesy Aleksander



# Nests

**Nests are as diverse as the birds that build them.** Avian nests provide physical protection and camouflage from predators. The *Nests* section provides plans for large-scale nest installations to draw attention to a habitat that often goes unseen.



Courtesy tonda

Photograph by Didier Descouens, distributed under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.



## Bug B&B

**Insects are everywhere and need homes and habitats.** Our food security, biodiversity, and restorative natural spaces all rely on pollinators to thrive. In this display, enhanced with whimsical sculptures and insect homes, (or “Bug B&Bs,”) discover how humans can help build and restore insect habitats.



Courtesy nanineerame



## Biomes

**Biomes are communities of plants and animals that occupy a major habitat like a forest.**

The *Biomes* section presents five of the most common global biomes: desert, grassland, tundra, rainforest and aquatic, and the importance of conserving these diverse ecosystems.



## Key to the Forest

A **keystone species** is a plant or animal that is **essential to how an ecosystem functions, often providing food and habitat**. Without them, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether. This exhibit illustrates how a single keystone species, such as a fig, serves its critical role.



Courtesy Tanes Ngamsom



## Foundation of the Sea

**Foundation species** are **fundamental to the structure and resilience of ecosystems, providing for most of the other species in the community**. This section focuses on the importance of coral as a foundation species and a habitat for 25% of marine life, and spotlights issues affecting the health of coral reefs.

## Sign of the Dragonfly

**Dragonflies** are **indicator species, organisms whose presence, absence, or abundance reflects the health of a specific ecosystem**.

This section provides facts about dragonflies and their habitats, and examples of other indicator species.





Courtesy Vlad61



Photograph by James Gagliardi, Smithsonian Gardens

## Meadows and Monarchs

**Best paired with diverse native plants that represent meadow ecology, this section explores ideas around soil structure and how plant roots help create critical soils.** It includes information about the incredible 3,000-mile migration of monarch butterflies, and ideas on how to protect their habitat.

Photograph by Mara Koenig / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region, distributed under a CC BY 2.0 license.



## Homes

**A home garden is about more than beauty—it can also be a diverse and abundant home for living creatures.** This section illustrates how gardeners can help support the organisms which bring a garden to life. Design drawings for abstract, whimsical house silhouettes emphasize the idea of “home.”

## Habitats of Flight

**Wildlife habitats have influenced the science of flight.** The installation highlights how animals and plants have influenced and inspired inventions of human flight and the importance of native habitats to the survival of birds, insects, and other wild creatures.



Courtesy Saddako



# *Habitat* at the Smithsonian



↑ Detailed instructions to create five different varieties of oversized nests

→ Design drawings to create six large bug sculptures, including this praying mantis

Originally displayed across the Smithsonian's 13 public gardens on the National Mall, *Habitat*'s installations adapt easily to a variety of landscapes.

The exhibition package includes design drawings for 3-D elements such as the sculptures shown here, along with suggestions for augmenting existing landscapes to create "living classrooms." The sculptures and 3-D elements are designed to be modified for size, complexity, materials, and budget.





↓ Design drawings to build large-scale dragonflies



← Instructions for creating a “coral” habitat



↑ Design drawings for eye-catching house silhouettes





*Habitat* offers an engaging layer of educational interpretation to botanic gardens, arboretums and any public garden space.



Photograph by Courtney Celley/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, distributed under a CC BY 2.0 license.

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*Habitat* won the Special Achievement Award in the 2019 SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION EXCELLENCE IN EXHIBITIONS program.

Courtesy danisic





# A Complete Exhibition Package

As a host of **Habitat**, in addition to design files with Smithsonian-curated text and images, and suggestions for further supplementation, you will also receive the following:

- Detailed, illustrated manual with fabrication and installation instructions
- Access to educational and programming resources through Smithsonian Gardens
- Promotion of your exhibition through SITES website and social media
- Public relations support including sample press releases, images, logos; digital graphics templates of advertisements, posters, and other promotional materials; and advice on promoting the exhibition and hosting special events

The exhibition is developed by Smithsonian Gardens and made available by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.



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Courtesy bstorage



# Project Partners

**The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES)** has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 65 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work, and play.

For more information, including exhibition descriptions and tour schedules, visit [sites.si.edu](https://sites.si.edu).

As a vital and vibrant part of the Smithsonian Institution, **Smithsonian Gardens** engages people with plants and gardens, informs on the roles both play in our cultural and natural worlds, and inspires appreciation and stewardship. In addition to managing and maintaining more than 180 acres of gardens and grounds in the Washington, D.C. area, Smithsonian Gardens is a nationally accredited museum offering a variety of educational programs and exhibitions.

Visit [gardens.si.edu](https://gardens.si.edu) to learn more.



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Brett McNish, Smithsonian Gardens

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Courtesy cturtletrax

