

Welcome to the Adventures of Our Class Pets!



Pets in the Classroom Lesson Plan

HERMIT CRABS IN ROOM 66!

In the beginning.....



After an intro unit on pets, our class decided to adopt hermit crabs. We learned about their needs and care from online research, information sheets from pet stores, and books from our school library. We then proceeded into the process of incorporating our new pets into the classroom routines.

We used pet at our group table as a reward to encourage students to participate in writing activities, a weakness for one class. An example of an acrostic poem for one our crabs is on the next page.

We had a class observation diary, where students would record information observed while our pets were visiting their group tables. Their observations often included questions as to why something happened, such a physical change to the crab, and we'd turn this inquiry into an online research opportunity, or reading lesson for facts and details. Examples of those are also attached.

Language Arts Writing Assignment incorporating poetry writing with classroom pets:

Name _____

Let's write an acrostic poem about our new class pet, Fenwick the hermit crab! ©

F _____

E _____

N _____

W _____

I _____

C _____

K _____



Example of Reading Comprehension Activity incorporating inquiry based on observation of pets :

CRAB CARE MYTHS!



Did you just get your pet crabs today? Chances are, you have heard some misinformation from the pet store. Everyone has heard stories as to what is bad and what is good for hermit crabs. Some of them have a basis in fact, but more are myths and completely unfounded. Some of the more common myths are explained below.

Myth #1. Hermit crabs bite. Ah here is a classic one! Anyone who has owned a hermit crab for more than a week knows that hermit crabs cannot bite. They have no teeth in their mouths at all, just soft, fuzzy mouthparts! Hermit crabs can pinch, but they cannot bite.

Myth #2. Hermit crabs spread disease. Wrong-o! Hermit crabs are only as dirty as what you let them get into. For years, pet stores have kept hermit crab supplies in the same area as reptile supplies, so people get the idea that hermit crabs, like reptiles, harbor salmonella and/or other harmful bacteria. Simply not true. Hermit crabs' exoskeletons render them completely hypoallergenic. So kiss-a-crab today!

Myth #3. If a crab's big claw falls off, he will die. This is a common myth. The crab uses its big purple (or brown) claw as a trap-door to its shell home, and without it is more vulnerable to predators. However in captivity, it has no predators to be concerned with (except its cage-mates). Thus, there is no real reason why a crab who loses its large claw should die. Some crabs will regenerate, or grow, new claws. I have had at least five hermit crabs lose large claws and regenerate them.

Myth #4. Using a shell dish causes calcium to be added to the drinking water. The latest literature available on the subject suggests that a negligible amount of calcium get into the crabs' drinking water this way -- not nearly enough to make a difference in the crabs' general nutrition. The same water would have to sit in the same dish for days and days before it would absorb anything even vaguely approaching a beneficial calcium level. Do your crab a favor and give him or

Myths Comprehension Selection, page 2:



her a chunk of cuttlebone in the crab tank, or add some ground cuttlebone to their food. They will ingest much more important calcium that way.

Myth #5. Hermit crabs do not dig in to the substrate to molt. Actually, all hermit crabs will attempt to dig into the substrate to molt. HOWEVER if the substrate is kept bone dry or is not deep enough, they will be unable to dig and will "give up." So if you see your crab has been digging in the sand of the crab tank, give him his own little isolation unit to dig in. You'll be glad you did later, when he digs up to the surface with a beautiful new exoskeleton!

Myth #6. Bathing is bad for hermit crabs. Absolutely false! Bathing is critical to the care of hermit crabs, but the critical step is that they must be able to bathe THEMSELVES! Bathing should not be something you do to a hermit crab, it should be something they do themselves by walking into their dishes. Hermit crabs know how to take care of themselves and they automatically know when they need more fresh or salt water to replenish their "shell water." A hermit crab is certainly a "land crab," however they carry a little bit of water with them wherever they go, inside their seashells. This "shell water" keeps their abdomen and gills moist enough to properly function. Without adequate moisture they suffer from respiratory distress and eventually death. You must provide your hermit crabs with two water dishes, each one deep enough that your largest crab can crawl in deep enough to immerse his entire body (but not necessarily his shell) to replenish his/her shell water. If you have crabs of varying sizes, be sure to provide some pebbles in the dish so smaller crabs can climb out of a deep dish and not drown. One dish should contain dechlorinated fresh water, the other sea water or an equivalent. NEVER add table salt to the water, only use salt intended to make synthetic "sea water" for keeping saltwater aquariums.

Myth #7. Hermit crabs can "catch" diseases from old hermit crab shells. Not true! If you boil all shells at a rolling boil for about five minutes and allow them to cool, your crab will not "catch" anything from a shell. Make sure the shell is nice and cleaned out before you boil it, though. Rinse it in the tap and pour out the water repeatedly. If the shell was recently occupied, you should probably soak it overnight before boiling, especially if the crab who was wearing the "old" shell came from a pet store recently. If there is dirt stuck on the outside of the shell, try rubbing it with a damp dish cloth until all the dirt comes off.

Source: <http://www.hermit-crabs.com/myths.html>



Bridging lessons on anatomy and life cycles were a wonderful way to incorporate our classroom pets in our science program. Student ongoing engagement promoted understanding of vocabulary and concepts related to hermit crabs and inspired development of crabitat building as a related STEM opportunity.

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Life Expectancy
Hermit crabs can live up to **40 years**

Larvae
The eggs are laid in the open ocean, and burst as soon as they come in contact with the salt water. The larvae float along the ocean currents, eating plankton and metamorphosing several times before looking like a hermit crab crossed with a lobster. This stage is called the megalopa

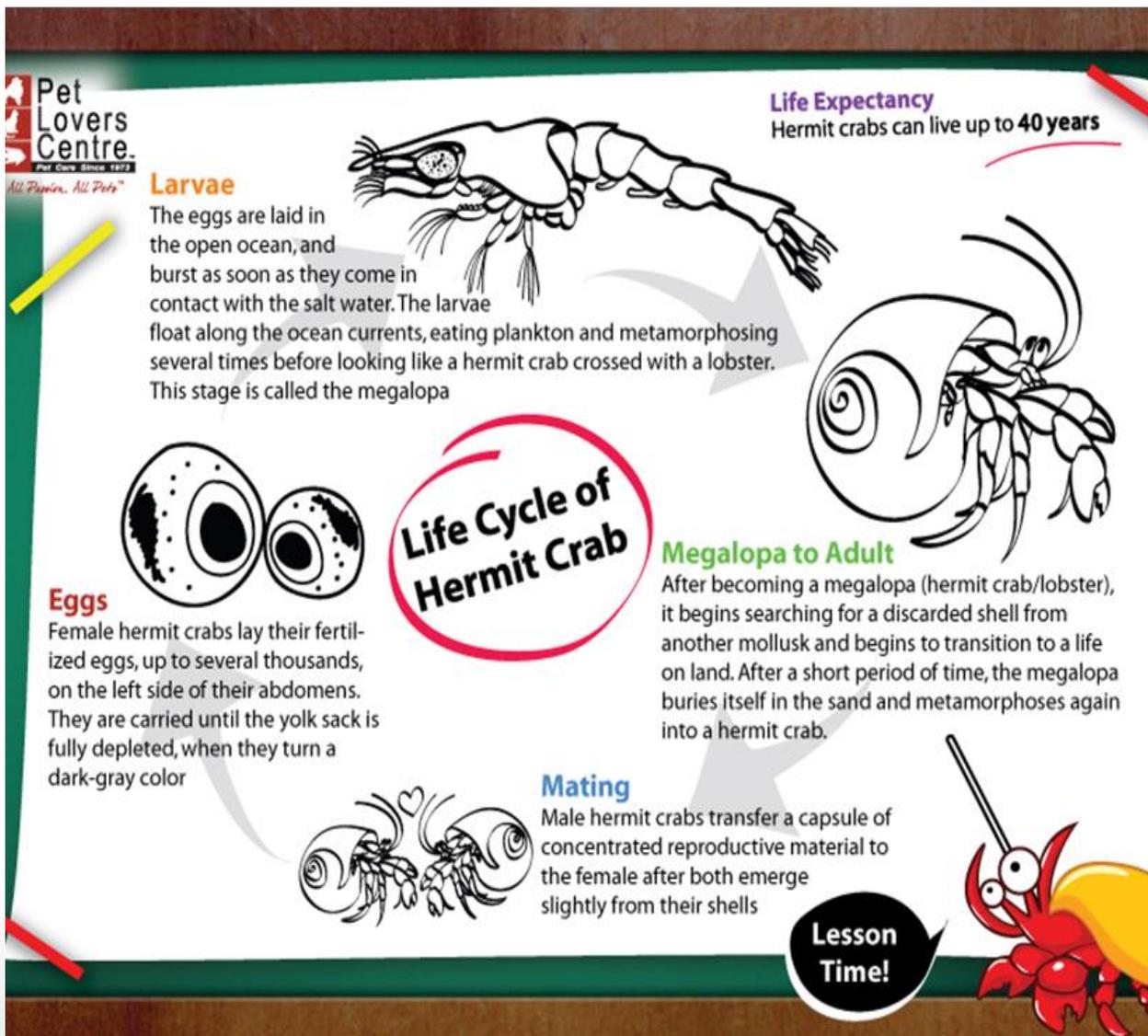
Eggs
Female hermit crabs lay their fertilized eggs, up to several thousands, on the left side of their abdomens. They are carried until the yolk sack is fully depleted, when they turn a dark-gray color

Life Cycle of Hermit Crab

Megalopa to Adult
After becoming a megalopa (hermit crab/lobster), it begins searching for a discarded shell from another mollusk and begins to transition to a life on land. After a short period of time, the megalopa buries itself in the sand and metamorphoses again into a hermit crab.

Mating
Male hermit crabs transfer a capsule of concentrated reproductive material to the female after both emerge slightly from their shells

Lesson Time!



The most exciting adventures of our class pets resulted from our created Adoption Program. As holiday season approached, and students were more confident in the classroom routines regarding pet care, we established a classroom adoption program. This allowed students to take hermit crabs (we had five at this point), home for the extended weekends and week long vacation periods.

Attached is an example of the adoption agreement form we created. It also allowed the parents and community to be a part of our special hermie community, which was a wonderful responsibility and awareness project. To this day, students still request to be a part of our pet adoption program. Parents praised the opportunity to work with their children at home in such a hands-on program, and our observation journals are well read and preserved. Student writing, record keeping, and observing skills have greatly improved from their involvement and our classroom is a favorite spot for special lunches, so students can use any free time with our hermies.



Adopt Our Hermit Crabs For A Weekend or Holiday!



Dear Parents and Students,

I have offered the class the opportunity to care for our class Hermit Crabs over a weekend or a holiday break. If you and your child would like to care for our Hermit Crabs, please read and complete the form below. Return to school at least one week before scheduled visit. Thank you!

My child _____ has my permission to care for the class Hermit Crabs. A calendar will be sent home in the near future noting the date of pick up and return.

I agree to pick up the Hermit Crabs with my child at dismissal time, receive travel kit, and transport them to and from school in my vehicle. Care sheet, food, and related pet supplies will be included in the travel kit, as well as an emergency contact number.

I assume full responsibility for any mishaps incurred during the time it is in our care due to poor supervision.

Parent Signature _____

Date _____ Contact Number _____

Hermit Crab Check List

Below you will find a list of what tasks should be done daily, weekly and monthly.

Daily

- o Refill fresh water dish and the ocean water pond
- o Empty and clean the food dish (no chemicals)
- o Offer a different food each day
- o Rinse sponge in water free of chlorine
- o The temperature of air should be between 70-80 F
- o Do not place in direct sunlight

Weekly

- o Bath Hermit Crabs so they may dislodge waste from their shell
- o Clean the bowls and dishes with hot water (without chemicals)
- o Pick through the substrate for food and feces
- o Give your sea sponges a good cleaning , squeeze to get any stagnant water out and leave to dry (for long life)
- o Sterilize (boiling) seashells and re-offer them to crabs

Monthly

- o Replace gravel or sand
- o Where needed, remove all items from tank (substrate, wood, toys, dishes etc) and clean by boiling or baking
- o Wipe down walls of tank with vinegar and water. (Avoid cleaning chemicals eg. bleach)

That's all Folks!

