



Habitat Tracker

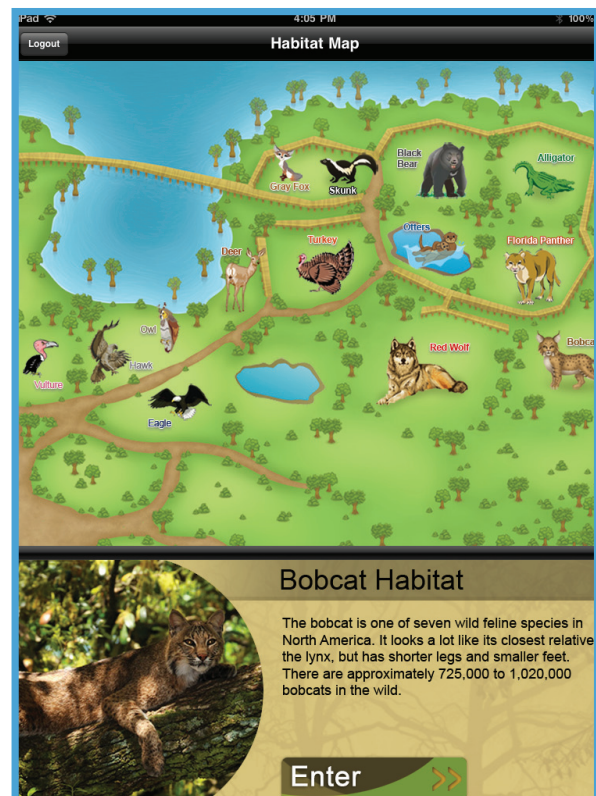
Learning about scientific inquiry through digital journaling in wildlife centers

The Learning Systems Institute, in partnership with the Tallahassee Museum, is working on a \$1.2 million project to design and develop a digital journaling system that uses online and mobile technologies to help elementary school students better understand the nature of science. The goal of the project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Science, is to encourage students to become active participants in the scientific inquiry process by collecting and analyzing data about wildlife and natural habitats before, during, and after visits to the wildlife center. These visits will be part of a week-long intervention on scientific inquiry in which pre-visit planning and post-visit data analysis are essential parts of the learning experience.

The Tallahassee Museum in Tallahassee, Florida, is a living museum on 52 wooded acres that is home to a broad diversity of animals native to North Florida, including endangered species such as the Florida panther and red wolf. The animals are on display in 11 large natural habitat areas that visitors can view from elevated boardwalks. Students will research the museum's wildlife and natural habitats online prior to their visit, collaborating with students from other schools to develop research questions and determine what data they will need to gather in order to answer their questions. At the museum, students will use iPads to record observations about wildlife in digital journals, sharing their data with other students online.

Back in the classroom, students will return to the project website to analyze data and answer their research questions. They will learn about the nature of science by asking their own questions about the natural world, recording observations and

drawing appropriate inferences from them, conducting peer review by discussing their data with students from other classes, and recognizing that science works in various empirically based ways. Such experience is essential if students are to master the new "inquiry and nature of science" benchmarks advocated by national science education reform efforts and included in the State of Florida's science education



An iPad screenshot of the Habitat Tracker application.

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standards. Drawing on more than a decade of prior research on mobile computing in museums, and supported through the use of extensive online resources in the classroom, this project will help about 1,500 students from rural and urban elementary school districts gain experience planning and conducting scientific inquiries over a period of three years.

More Information

On the project: <http://tracker.cci.fsu.edu/project/>

On LSI: www.lsi.fsu.edu