

The Fish Gymkhana

Ages 5 to 12.

The game

Dams and reservoirs divide populations of fish species along European rivers. As a consequence, there are genetic, morphological and ecological differences between populations upstream and downstream. Sea trout (*Salmo trutta*), Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), twaite shad (*Alosa fallax*), and European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) are some of the affected species whose populations have been fragmented or reduced, and reservoirs are now considered as good angling locations. For improving local awareness about the importance of preserving migratory fish in European rivers, we have designed a game 'The Fish Gymkhana' for people of various ages living near dams and reservoirs. To play it, players should think like a migratory fish. The activity's aim is the awareness about the importance of preserving rivers in a cooperative learning environment, where participants can recognise local flora and fauna.

Instructions

To play 'The Fish Gymkhana' have any number of teams, each team of two to six players. Each team will choose the name of a migratory fish species as an identifying logo. They are given three pieces of paper: a map with the route, a set of clues and their meanings, and a quiz with simple questions –some of them posed from a fish's perspective. All participants start the game at the same point, but each team leaves every 10-20 minutes (depending on the number of teams, age and pathway ease). The objective is to find and follow the path indicated by the clues and arrive safely at the end –where the game's organizers will be waiting happily for them with treats or toys. The members of each team work in a cooperative and coordinated way: checking the map, looking for clues, answering the questions in the quiz, from the beginning to the end of the game.

Materials






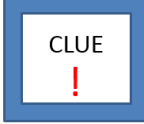

Map

The organisers must consider the participant's ages i.e. don't set departure and arrival points that are too long, difficult or dangerous for the youngest children playing. Our recommendation is to design a simple map of the area where 'The Fish Gymkhana' is going to be played. Preferably located along a river or reservoir (taking health and safety into account and ensuring adequate supervision).

Sign code

Teams will find signs marked on the ground, walls or trees with chalk or something similar (or laminated card) along the route. These signs should be easy to erase afterwards. The type of signs should be prepared by the organizers prior to the game... At least a few signs of each type should appear on the path, including several clues that will depend on the particular zone and country where the game is played.

The signs and their meanings may be (just examples):

	Right direction		Hurry up!
	Wrong direction		Observe surroundings
	Wait for 5 minutes		Find the clue and solve it!
		Finish line	

Quiz

The quiz contains questions about characteristic elements that the players will find along the path, noticeably in the points marked with “Observe surroundings” signs. Nearby the points marked with “Find the clue and solve it” a paper, cardboard or plastic card is hidden, with a question related with local migratory fish, historical fishing in the region, year of reservoir construction or whatever fun topic the organisers can think of. Indeed, the participants can check on the Internet with their smartphone to find the answer, if all the teams have access and can use a smartphone.

The organizers must be sure the clue cards are easy to find by players. The players should leave the card in the same place where they found it. All the questions in the quiz should be answered (correctly or not) for a team to gain a treat at the end of the game.

Wrong answers do not matter because they are opportunities to learn, though they should not be aware of this at the start. The right answers should be given/explained to them at the end, and the organisers can celebrate and be open to new ideas or different answers that the teams may have. The aim is for players to understand trout life and reach the end point i.e. to think and feel like a trout!

After the game

The organizers can encourage the participants to help them with a fun aftergame activity by erasing the signs, cleaning the zone and leaving the nature in the same state or better than when they arrived. It's healthy, it's outdoors exercise! The organizers can bring bags, gloves and other materials for cleaning up.

Let's play 'The Fish Gymkhana'!