Connecting students’ learning to their own special places can provide an engaging way to reinforce ecological concepts.

**Sample Portfolio Components**

- **Biome: Amur (Boreal Forest)**
  - The far northeast corner of Asia, leading to Russia and the Ural Mountains, the boreal forest is home to some of the Earth’s oldest living things.
  - Students pick an area of special significance to them and provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Amazon (Tropical Rainforest)**
  - The Amazon Rainforest is the largest tropical rainforest in the world, covering almost one-fifth of South America.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Australia (Tropical Rainforest)**
  - The Great Barrier Reef is one of the world’s most diverse and largest coral reefs.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Antarctic (Antarctic Tundra)**
  - The Antarctic Tundra is the coldest and windiest place on Earth.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Boreal (Taiga)**
  - The Boreal Forest is the largest biome in the Northern Hemisphere.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Congo (Rainforest)**
  - The Congo Basin is home to some of the world’s most diverse wildlife.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Coral (Coral Reef)**
  - Coral reefs are the world’s most diverse ecosystems.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Desert (Sahara Desert)**
  - The Sahara Desert is the largest hot desert in the world.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Desert (Sahel Desert)**
  - The Sahel is a semi-arid region located on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Dry (Desert)**
  - The Great Salt Desert is the largest desert in the world.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Floodplain (Amazon Valley)**
  - The Amazon Valley is home to one of the world’s most diverse ecosystems.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Forest (Floodplain Forest)**
  - The Floodplain Forest is a type of wetland forest.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Grassland (Prairie)**
  - The Great Plains is a vast grassland region.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Mountain (Andes Mountains)**
  - The Andes Mountains are the longest mountain range in the world.
  - Students provide information on the flora and fauna, significance and ecosystem.

- **Biome: Mountain (Alps)**
  - The Alps are the highest mountain range in Europe.
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- **Biome: Mountain (Rockies)**
  - The Rocky Mountains are a mountain range located in North America.
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**Evaluating Portfolio Elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Sample rubric for topic entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flora &amp; Fauna</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fifty percent of flora and fauna</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ninety percent of flora and fauna</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

- **Student feedback** suggests this could be a useful assignment:
  - "Through executing this portfolio, I had to make connections with examples we had not talked about in class. Having to do this enabled me to understand many of the concepts better and in a new light depending on how easily the example fits the concepts." E. Bartley
  - "Connecting the topics to a place that I know well allowed me to vividly picture the dynamics in the communities within my special place." M. Berg
  - "Everything from topic one to topic eight all has parts which are interconnected, and it was interesting to see how I could relate each topic to the organisms that I had selected." G. Godbold
  - "Overall, I really enjoyed being able to reflect on the material and it gave me a purpose to review it." E. Sugold

- **Overall**: This portfolio was an interesting experience that helped me dive into the topic of ecological dynamics more deeply. J. Sweder

- **Acknowledgements**: We are grateful to our former students, Kayleigh Bartley, Megan Berg, Gabriel Godbold, Sara Paulgaard, and Jackson Sweder, who were willing to share their previous portfolio materials for this poster.