

Wildlife Is Everywhere!



Even in the cold of winter, one can find signs of wildlife anywhere. From the cobwebs in the house to the small footprints of a squirrel outside, nature walks can be just as successful when the snow is falling! People often think of wildlife only as large animals like those they see in pictures of Africa with lions and elephants. They might think of creatures of the North American forests that they have seen like deer and elk. But wildlife includes all animals that have not been domesticated by people.

Domesticated animals are those which have been tamed, made captive and bred for special purposes. Farm animals and pets are considered domesticated animals. Wild animals are all the rest.

What may be surprising is that wildlife includes the smallest animal organisms--even those that can be seen only through a microscope. Spiders, insects, reptiles, amphibians and most species of fish, birds and mammals may be considered wildlife. Wildlife occurs in a tremendous variety of forms and colors and can be found all around us. Even when we think we can see or hear no animals at all, they exist somewhere around us--maybe even under our feet! There are thousands of life forms on our skin, in our hair and inside our bodies! In fact, each of us would die if all the organisms that inhabit our bodies were to disappear. People are never truly alone in an environment--some form of wildlife is near.

The major purpose of this activity is for young people to understand that people and wildlife share environments. By investigating microenvironments or microhabi-



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Even in the wintertime, children can search for wildlife both outside and inside. Egg cases can often be found in evergreens.

tats, they should be encouraged to generalize that wildlife exists in some form in all areas of the earth--even the deserts and the Antarctic.

As you take your "walks" outside or inside, remember to ask children to observe but not touch or disturb animals they see.

Objectives

Children will: 1) state that humans and wildlife share environments; and 2) generalize that wildlife is present in areas all over the earth.

Method

Children search their environment for evidence of wildlife.

Materials

Paper
Pencils or pens
Magnifying glass
String (optional)

Procedure

1. Invite the children to explore the classroom or home, looking for signs of wildlife. Even

in the most clearly swept rooms, you can usually find some signs of life either past or present. It might be a spider web, dead insects in light covers, or insect holes along baseboards and behind books. After the search and a discussion with the children about what, if anything,

they found, introduce the idea that people and other animals share environments. Sometimes we don't even notice that we are sharing our environment with other living things, but we are.

2. Expand the search for other animals to the out-of-doors. If in a school environment, take the students on the school grounds

and give everyone, working in pairs, five minutes to find an animal or



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A "field trip" to the basement can result in spider and cricket sightings.

some sign that an animal has been there. Look for indirect evidence, such as tracks, webs, droppings, feathers and nests. (Be sure not to harm or seriously disturb anything.) After five minutes, sit down and talk about what everyone found. Or, in advance, create a wildlife trail for your students to follow--looking for signs of animals along the way--by placing a long piece of string around an area of the school grounds and "salting" the path along the string with evidence of animals: bones, feathers, etc.

The students can explore the trail in a "follow-the-leader" fashion. The students should keep their observations to themselves. At the end of the trail, ask everyone to sit and discuss what they saw. If at home, survey your yard, kitchen, neighborhood, or city park looking for wildlife!

3. Talk with the children about what they learned. Emphasize that they have seen that people and wildlife share environments. They have seen evidence of wildlife at their school or home. Ask the children to guess whether they think different kinds of animals are found all over the earth--in the deserts, oceans, mountains and cities. They may draw from their own experiences and talk about places they have been and have seen animals. Encourage them to make the generalization that wildlife is present everywhere.

Extensions

1. Search magazines and books for wildlife from all over the planet.

2. "Invent" names and descriptions for the wildlife found outside during searches. Older children can observe the animals, write a written description, and then check their invented names and descrip-

tions against the scientific names and information found in reference materials.

3. Use state maps. Look up names of towns, cities and counties with wild animal names!

Evaluation

1. In which of the following places would you be likely to find animals living? In a forest; in a hot, dry desert; in a lake; at the top of a mountain; at the North Pole; or in New York City. What kinds of animals might you find in these places? Name any areas on earth where you couldn't find any animals.

2. Name the things you saw,

heard or smelled which showed you that wildlife lives in the classroom and on the school grounds (or at home).

3. Draw a picture of a place with many different animals living there. Explain your picture.

This activity was adapted with permission from Project WILD, 2001 (Council for Environmental Education). Teachers and youth group leaders may obtain a Project WILD guide by attending a workshop.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Gallaher, Project WILD Coordinator, at 304-558-2771 or elizabethgallaher@wvdnr.gov.

Some Cool Things To Do In The Winter!



1. Make ice castles and sculptures by freezing water in containers. Grab any type of trays, buckets, cans or plastic tubs that you can (with permission!). Fill with water and freeze overnight. The next day, release the ice from the molds, use snow as mortar and make some incredible sculptures.

2. Make bird seed "ornaments." Slice day-old bagels in thin circles and let dry a bit on a tray. Slather on peanut butter and sprinkle with bird seed. Place a string through the hole and tie on a tree for the birds. This will get rid of the post-holiday blues and helps wildlife! (Do this in a high edge tray, like a lasagna pan, so that bird seed doesn't get everywhere.)



3. Take a walk on a clear night to gaze at the stars. A full moon also makes for a magical walk (but cuts down on star-gazing). Look at the shadows and listen for owls. Don't forget the hot cocoa!

4. Take a magnifying glass outdoors to take a close look at snowflakes. Bring something dark, like a scarf, that will provide a good background.

5. Make some easy, no-sew "draft dodgers." You just need some old towels, extra material, and satin ribbon or string. Roll a towel width-wise so that it looks like a long hotdog. Wrap this up tightly in a piece of material that is wider than the towel roll. Tie the ends with ribbons or strings. Now put your draft dodger on a window sill or door jamb--where ever Old Man Winter is trying to sneak in!

