

Wildlife Is Everywhere!



Objectives

Students will (1) compare human and wildlife habitat, and (2) generalize that wildlife is present around the world.

Method

Students search their surroundings for evidence of wildlife.

Materials

None

Background

Many people think of wildlife as the large animals of Africa, such as the lion and elephant, or the large animals of the North American forests, such as the grizzly bear and elk. However, wildlife includes all animals that have not been domesticated by people.

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. Even when animals are silent or not visible, they exist somewhere around us. Thousands of organisms live in and on human skin, hair, and bodies. In fact, the organisms that inhabit human bodies play a part in human survival. Some form of animal life is always near.

By investigating microenvironments or microhabitats, students will be able to generalize that wildlife exists in every country on the planet.

Procedure

NOTE: Ask students to observe, but not touch or disturb, any animals they may see.

1. Invite the students to explore the room looking for signs of wildlife. Even in the cleanest rooms, some signs of life can be found. It might be a spider web, dead insects near lights, or insect holes along baseboards and behind books. After the search and a discussion with the students about what they might have found, introduce the idea that people and other animals share the same environment. Sometimes people do not even notice that they are sharing the environment with other living things.
2. Take the search for animals outside. Divide the students into pairs, and give each pair five minutes to find an animal or 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 any evidence that is found). Afterward, sit down and discuss what everyone found.

Grade Level: K-4

Subject Areas: Science, Language Arts, Environmental Education

Duration: one 30- to 45-minute session

Group Size: any

Setting: indoors and outdoors

Conceptual Framework Topic Reference: HNIA, HNIB1, HNIB2

Key Vocabulary: wildlife, wild, domesticated, environment, evidence

Appendices: Field Ethics, Observations and Inferences, Early Childhood

continued

3. Discuss with the students what they have learned. Emphasize that the experience shows that people and wildlife share the same environment. Ask the students to predict where 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.

Extensions

1. Observe wildlife in yards, kitchens, neighborhoods, and city parks.
2. Search magazines and books for pictures of wildlife from all over the planet.
3. Invent names and descriptions for the wildlife found during wildlife searches. Students can observe the animals, write descriptions, and then check their invented names and descriptions against the scientific names and information found in reference materials.
4. Using state maps, look up towns, cities, and counties named after wild animals.

Aquatic Extension

Survey your school grounds or neighborhood for any aquatic wildlife habitats. Check puddles, sprinkler systems, and, if possible, streams, beaches, and ponds. Look for evidence—direct or indirect—of any wildlife that lives in or near these water-related areas. Tell or show someone what you find, taking care not to damage any wildlife or its habitat.

Evaluation

1. In which of the following places would animals be living: in a forest; in a hot, dry, desert; in a lake; at the top of a mountain; at the North Pole; in New York City? What kinds of animals would be found in those places? Name areas on Earth where animals would not be found.
2. What evidence did the class have (using the five senses) that showed that wildlife lives in any location where this activity was conducted?
3. Draw a picture of a place and include as many different animal species as possible that would be found living there. Explain your picture to a friend or adult.
4. Identify and describe three things that people could do to increase the numbers and kinds of wildlife living in an area that has little evidence of wildlife.

