

Wildlife

OBJECTIVES:

- Introduce and familiarize children about wildlife.
- Develop an interest in local wildlife and their habits.
- Develop a responsibility and caring attitude toward wildlife.
- Develop an understanding that plants are a part of wildlife.
- Develop an understanding of endangered/extinct animals.

GROUP SIZE:

6–8 children per adult volunteer

TIME FRAME:

This lesson is designed for a group meeting between 30 and 60 minutes. Each activity will take about 5–15 minutes to complete.

BACKGROUND:

Wildlife are plants and animals that have not been domesticated. They are simply plants and animals which live in the “wild.” When the colonists first came to this country and for many years following, there was an abundance of wild animals. They were hunted for furs, food, and even sport, often without regard for the future. In time, the natural habitats of these animals were disturbed by cutting down forests, draining swamps, and using large areas of land for farming, contributing to the destruction of wildlife. Today, many efforts are in place to conserve our wildlife such as wildlife centers, national parks, and wildlife preserves.

LIFE SKILL AREAS

- Social skills and decision making will be developed through group games and discussions.
- Hand-eye coordination, small-motor skills, and short-term memory can be developed by the various coloring activities.
- Large-motor skills will be developed by group activities.

HELPS TO THE VOLUNTEER

Try these suggestions:

- Choose one or two of the following activities from each section.
- Try to create appropriate atmosphere by decorating the room with posters and props and playing background music.
- Pre-meeting preparation by the 4-H members will be helpful by having members collect pictures of wildlife they think may live around them.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

1. Getting Started

ACTIVITY “Getting Familiar with Wildlife”

Materials: pictures or live specimens of wildlife (fish, wild flowers, butterflies), and large sheet of paper to make list

Wildlife are plants and animals that have not been domesticated. People often think of wildlife as the deer or rabbit they hunt or the fish they catch. Wildlife include the following: ducks, rabbits, moose, deer, squirrels, turkeys, robins, wild flowers, coyotes, frogs, elk, butterflies, mockingbirds, beavers, fish, foxes, bears, raccoons, and many other species.

Have the children sit on the floor in a half circle. Explain the term wildlife and have them brainstorm as many examples of wildlife species as they can. Discuss with them all the various types of wildlife and list. Have pictures of wildlife (squirrels, fish, etc.) or live specimens (fish, wild flowers, butterflies, etc.) in which the children can learn more about. Are any considered endangered species? What does “endangered species” mean?

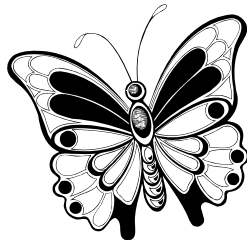
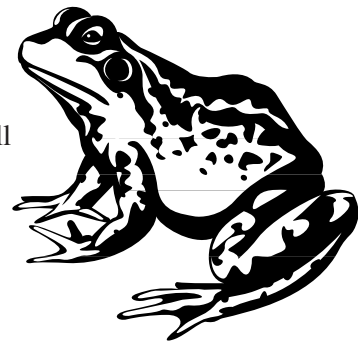
Application: Which of the wildlife listed are around us?

ACTIVITY “Nature Walk”

Materials: crayons, markers, pencils, and construction paper

Take the children for a nature walk in a wooded area, park, field, or grassy area. Familiarize children with the term wildlife and have them look for wildlife such as birds, squirrels, insects, wild flowers, etc. Ask them to be very quiet and listen to the sounds of nature. What does it sound like? Have them pick some wild flowers. What do they smell like?

Application: After the nature walk, have the children draw with markers, crayons, or pencils on construction paper what they saw when they were on the nature walk. Ask them to think for a minute of what they saw and then to draw it.



2. Digging Deeper

ACTIVITY “Wildlife Collage”

Materials: construction paper, markers, crayons, glue, tape, magazines with wildlife pictures, and wildlife specimens (see below under *Preparation*)

Preparation: Gather wild flowers, weeds, leaves, sticks, tree bark, nuts, etc. and place in boxes.

Have the children make a wildlife collage using construction paper, markers, magazines, and the plants, sticks, nuts, etc. in the boxes. Encourage the children to be creative and use specimens from the boxes, plus drawings or pictures of wildlife from magazines to make a wildlife collage.

ACTIVITY “Stained Glass Leaves”

Materials: wax paper, various tree leaf samples, crayon shavings, old cloth or shirt, and a hot iron

Preparation: Cut two 12-inch X 12-inch squares of wax paper per child, collect leaves from various trees, and make crayon shavings by taking old crayons and grating them like cheese in a cheese grater.

Begin an activity learning about tree leaves. Ask for three volunteers to come up in front and to face the others. Ask the other children how you can tell these three children apart. Answers such as hair color, eye color, boy or girl, shape of face, and height will be common. Relate these traits to characteristics of leaves. Use examples and drawings to show children. We can differentiate one leaf from another by the characteristics which make it up.

Kinds of leaves

- Simple leaf—only one blade
- Compound leaf—divided into two or more leaflets

Shapes of leaves

- Smooth edges, lobed edges, jagged edges

Leaf attachment

- Alternate—1 leaf attached at each node and point in different directions
- Opposite—leaves attached across from each other

Parts of Leaves

- Veins—leaf veins are either parallel or opposite
- Waxy coating—some leaves are more waxy than others



Have the children choose one large leaf or three to four smaller leaves and arrange on wax paper. Have the children decorate the area around the leaves with crayons shavings. Volunteers need to place the top layer of wax paper directly over the first, being careful not to move the leaves in between. Carefully place an old cloth or shirt over the wax paper and iron for 30–45 seconds or until crayon shavings melt both wax papers together. Note: All ironing should be done by adults. Have children cut the edges around their leaves. You have just made a “Stained Glass Leaf” which looks great when hung in a window.

Wildlife

Application: Leaves are just one example of the beauty of nature. Ask the children what are other beautiful things in nature?

3. Looking Within

ACTIVITY “Food Chain —Who Eats Who?”

Materials: pictures of wildlife in magazines, crayons, markers, construction paper, and glue

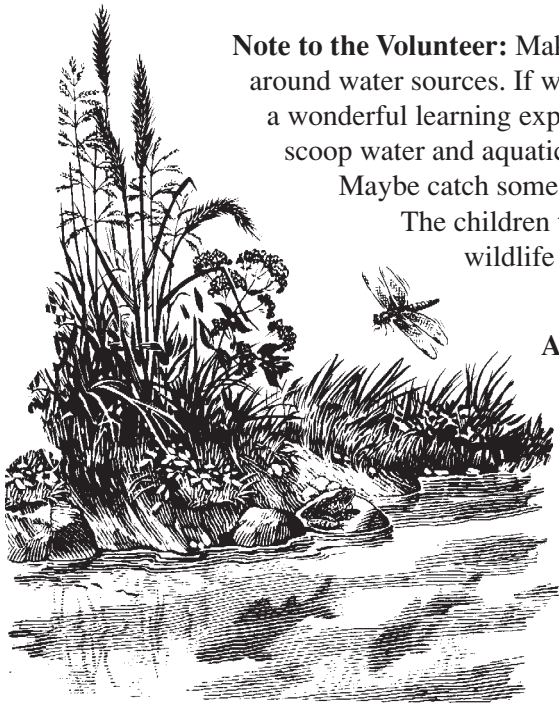
All living things get their food in different ways. The sequence in which they get food is known as the food chain. Plants and animals have different food chains.

Have the children arrange animals and plants from left to right on a piece of paper with lines showing the proper food chain order in nature. Have the children cut pictures from magazines, glue, color, and draw animals or plants for the food chain. Encourage creativity.

ACTIVITY “Critter Creek Hunt”

Materials: jars, water source, tubs and nets (optional)

Take the children to a shallow stream, lake, or pond so they can observe aquatic wildlife. Have the children wade into the shallow water in search of insects, fish, or plants. The children can place anything they find into small jars and take with them for further study. Make this a great learning experience.



Note to the Volunteer: Make sure the children are watched carefully when around water sources. If wading into water is not an option, you can make a wonderful learning experience on shore. Just take a large bucket and scoop water and aquatic wildlife and place in large tubs on shore.

Maybe catch some small fish or insects with nets and place in tubs.

The children then can simply observe the tubs of aquatic wildlife fun.

Application: Why is it important to protect our wildlife? Remind the children that fish, insects, and plants growing in and around water (streams, lakes, ponds, etc.) are considered wildlife.



4. Bringing Closure

ACTIVITY “Ecosystem Fun”

Materials: 2-liter plastic pop bottle, soil, gravel, small plants, rocks, sticks, leaves, insects, flowers, water, and plastic wrap

An ecosystem is all the parts of a particular environment. It is a self-sustaining, self-regulating community of organisms living together. An ecosystem includes those parts that are living (biotic factors) and those that are nonliving (abiotic factors). Living parts of an ecosystem are plants and animals that compete for space, water, and food. Nonliving parts that are essential for life include air, water, sunlight, and soil. These living and nonliving parts are constantly trying to maintain a balance in the system and live in harmony. See picture of ecosystem at end.

Explain to the children what an ecosystem is and the parts that make it up. Get examples from the children. Then have the children make their own ecosystem using a plastic 2-liter pop bottle.

Note to the Volunteer: A younger group of children may do better making one big ecosystem together, while an older group may want to make their own ecosystems.

Making the ecosystem: Cut the top portion of the bottle off for the children. Have the children fill the bottom 2 inches with gravel and then fill with 2 inches of soil. Have the children collect small plants from the yard or flower bed and replant in the soil in the bottle. The children can then add anything they want to their ecosystem such as sticks, leaves, rocks, flowers, insects, etc. Add water and cover the top of the ecosystem with plastic wrap. Place ecosystems in direct light.

Application: Look at the ecosystems at the next meeting. Have them look at the fog or water droplets on the inside. Explain to the children that this is water, and as the plants live in the container, water will evaporate from them and will condense on the sides of the bottle to form water drops. These water drops will then fall on the plants as rain. Explain that as long as the plants are in the ecosystem, they will not need to be watered because they have their own built-in sprinkler system, courtesy of Mother Nature.



5. Going Beyond

ACTIVITY “Extinction and Endangered Animals”

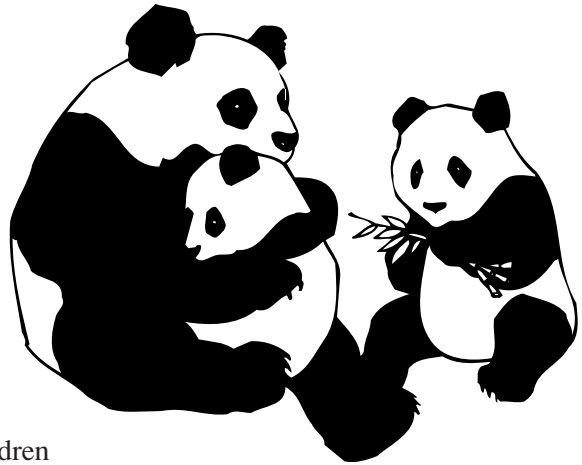
Materials: colored poker chips (maybe 25 of each color)

Discuss the difference between extinct and endangered animals. Have the children give examples of each. Have pictures to show the children:

Extinct—dinosaurs, teradactyles, mammoths

Endangered—bald eagles, whales, pandas

Have the children sit in a circle. Place 10 of each color poker chips in the middle with the remainder of the chips in piles outside the circle. Have the group pretend that they are on a “poker chip safari.” During the first round, let each child pick their favorite color poker chip.



The adult will then replace each chip taken with a chip of the same color (taken from a pile outside the circle). Have the children count how many chips of each color are left in the middle and outside the circle. At the beginning of the second round, tell the group that the blue chips are worth the most points, with the object of the safari being to get the most points. Draw the group’s attention to the number of blue chips left as the supply of the blue poker chips outside the circle dwindles. Relate the concept of endangered species to the game when the only blue chips left are the ones in the middle. As the children continue to “hunt” the blue chips, the blue chips eventually become “extinct.”

Variation for older children: Tell the group that the supply of blue poker chips will double every two turns. Have them think about how this should affect their “hunting habits.” Have them apply this to the endangered and extinction concepts.

Application: Ask the children why some wildlife no longer exists. What can they do to help endangered animals?

Reading Adventures

This listing of reading materials can be used as background information, for sharing before the group activity to set the stage for learning, or for sharing afterwards to reinforce the activity.

Rescuing Endangered Species, by Jean F. Blahfield

A New True Book: Endangered Animals, by Lynn M. Stone

Places of Refuge: Our National Wildlife Refuge System, by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent

What We Can Do About Protecting Nature, by Donna Bailey