

OVERVIEW

Coexisting with wildlife in urban environments requires us to be aware of the species living among us and to alter our behavior accordingly. This activity immerses students in an outdoor setting to discover differences in adjacent urban habitats and raise awareness about the effects of human activity on wildlife behaviors.

MATERIALS

- Clipboards with paper or nature journals
- Pencils and/or markers
- Animal artifacts and other visuals related to location (optional)



ACTIVITY

PREPARATION:

Conduct a pre-activity site visit; choose two exploration areas that have significant differences between managed and natural landscapes (e.g. a playground with a garden versus a wildflower meadow). These will be Locations 1 and 2, where students will make observations. Download and read “Tips for Successful Learning in the Great Outdoors” from the introduction letter to help guide you in choosing activity locations.

PART A:

Begin with students spending a few minutes in Location 1, looking around for wildlife or signs of wildlife. Signs can include nests, scat (animal feces), discarded feathers/furs, chewed leaves, tracks, etc. Allow for five to ten minutes of free observation. Students should be free to explore and experience. Demonstrate how to safely search around the location reminding students to leave the area as they found it.

Next, gather in a comfortable spot to sit and listen quietly. Discuss differences between human-made sounds (e.g. sirens, car traffic, and human voices) and natural sounds

THEME

Effects human activity can have on wildlife behavior.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Recognize that cities are diverse ecosystems that include people and wildlife.
- Compare and contrast observations.
- Explore how places and sounds found in a city can affect urban wildlife.

SUBJECTS

Biodiversity and humans, ecosystem relationships, human impacts on living and non-living organisms

SKILLS

Making observations, describing patterns, recognizing cause and effect patterns, developing solutions

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND MATERIALS

Suggested for facilitator

- Wildlife Basic Information Packet
- WildlifeNYC website
nyc.gov/wildlife

(e.g. birds chirping and leaves rustling). Students then will have one to two minutes of listening time. After the listening time, discuss the sights and sounds students observed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Name a sound that came from a human-made source.
- Name a sound that came from a natural source.
- Did you see any wildlife? If so, what animals did you see?
- Did you see any signs of wildlife, like feathers, fur, tracks, or scat?

After observations have been discussed and shared, proceed to Part B of the activity and move to Location 2.

PART B:

Proceed to Location 2. Give walking instructions and safety information as necessary (e.g. stay on the trail, stay together as a group, or be aware of poison ivy.) Impress upon the students that if they desire to see wildlife, noise needs to be kept to a minimum. Additionally, animal artifacts, like feathers or skulls, can be brought out to share with students along the way. Proceed at a slower pace so students can make observations.

Upon reaching Location 2, repeat Part A. Start with students looking around for signs of wildlife in a defined exploration area, and then gather together again to listen and make observations. Repeat observational listening in the same manner as in Location 1. During the discussion period, students will be asked to compare and contrast the sounds heard.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Name a sound that came from a human-made source from this second location.
- Name a sound that came from a natural source from this second location.
- Did you see any wildlife in this second location? If so, what animals did you see?
- Did you see any signs of wildlife, like feathers, fur, tracks, or scat?
- What sights and sounds were different between Location 1 and Location 2?
- What sights and sounds were the same between Location 1 and Location 2?
- Which location did you prefer exploring and listening in?
- Which locations do you think urban wildlife prefer? Why?

Continue to discuss why their preference matches or differs from that of urban wildlife. Conclude with students journaling about their experiences. Students can write or draw. They can include how the sounds, structures, or layout of a city might affect urban wildlife. Students can also create solutions to reduce or fix these effects.