

Wildlife is Everywhere

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

STEM Focus Area: Nature Play

Facilitator Learning Goal: Youth will understand wildlife can be found everywhere.

Youth Learning Target:

- "I can find nature everywhere."

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Activity Duration: 45 minutes

Class Size: Any Size

Minimum Group Size: none

Type of Space: Outdoor

Age of Youth: Grades K-2

Guiding Question: What is the question to explore OR the problem or challenge to solve?

What kinds of nature can you find up-close?

Through this activity, youth will:

- Observe and investigate nature within 1 square foot of space.
- Record observations of the nature they find.
- Share and communicate data with classmates.

Facilitator Prep:

Facilitators will need to prepare lengths of string that, when tied together, equal approximately 1 square foot of space.

Literacy Connection: Great books to get youth support learning about (*available on Amazon*).

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- Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery in Your Own Backyard by Loree Griffin Burns
- Finding Wild by Megan Wagner Loyd

Facilitator Checklist in the Learning Environment:

- Predict and hypothesize
- Develop and use models
- Measure materials
- ✓ Observe
- Investigate
- ✓ Record observations
- Analyze and infer
- Share and communicate data
- Interpret data
- Test and revise
- Draw conclusions and relationships

✓ **Have voice and agency, make decisions and guide their own learning**

PREPARATION

Materials

- String
- Magnifying glasses
- Observation sheets

Room

This activity will take place outdoors in a grassy area, preferably where there is a mix of vegetation and not only a manicured lawn.

Content

Most people think wildlife is only in far off places with large animals such as lions, tigers and rhinos. Wildlife includes any animal that has not been domesticated by people. Wildlife can be flowers and bugs in our backyard or spiders crawling in the corner of a classroom.

Common misconceptions:

- Wildlife are animals such as bears, lions and tigers, things found in faraway places. – wildlife actually includes any animal that has not been domesticated by people.
- Wildlife means animals. - Wildlife includes plants and animals.
- Wildlife is big things like trees and giraffes. - Wildlife is not always big. Insects, song birds, moss and dandelions are all considered wildlife.

Inquiry

Your primary goal as facilitator is to encourage youth to focus on their circle and look for wildlife they may not be expecting. You can prompt those discussions with questions like the following:

- What do you notice in your circle?
- What smells are you finding?
- How do things inside your circle feel?
- Are there any animals? What kinds?
- Are there any signs of animals?
- Do you hear any animal sounds?

Facilitator Checklist for Preparation:

- ✓ Organization: I practiced the activity/technology, prepared materials/extras/place to record youth ideas, completed an activity (including timings).
- ✓ Materials: Materials are appropriate for teaching the learning goals; youth will be able to use them and will think they are appealing.
- ✓ Space Utilization: The space is set up appropriately for the activity and there will be no safety issues or distractions.
- ✓ Relevance: I have researched why the content matters to youth's everyday lives.
- ✓ Content Learning: I have become familiar with the content.
- ✓ Inquiry: I have become familiar with how authentic, age-appropriate inquiry practices look in this activity.

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Show the children pictures of different animals and ask them to sort them between wild and non-wild animals, or animals that people take care of. Then ask if they have seen any wild animals lately – write their answers on the board so everyone can see.

Ask: where do wild animals live? Are there any wild animals around our building? Inside our building?

Go for a wildlife hunt in your building – what kinds of wildlife can we find?

Facilitator Checklist for Introduction to Activity:

- ✓ Space Utilization: I will use the space informally avoiding the lecture hall format.
- ✓ Purposeful Activities: This intro section gets youth on track for the learning goal.
- ✓ Content Learning: If age appropriate, I will accurately present content.
- ✓ Inquiry: In this or another section of the activity, youth carry out one or more inquiry practices.
- ✓ Relationships: I will make each youth feel welcome.
- ✓ Relevance: In this or another section, I will guide the youth in a sustained discussion of how the activity relates to their everyday lives.
- ✓ Youth Voice: In this or another section, I will allow youth the opportunity to make decisions about their learning experiences.

ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT (30 MINUTES)

Take youth outside, have them pick an area of ground that they want to study.

Instruct them to put their string circle on the ground and observe the area inside the circle very closely, pushing grass aside if necessary to see what's underneath.

Have them record/draw on their observation sheets what they see. Everything that is wildlife from leaves, grass, moss, dirt, water, bugs, critters, footprints, droppings, feathers, etc.

Facilitator Checklist for Activity Engagement:

- ✓ Space Utilization: I will use the space informally avoiding the lecture hall format.
- ✓ Participation: All youth will have access to the activity.
- ✓ Purposeful Activities: This core section helps youth to move toward the learning goal.
- ✓ Engagement: This activity has youth physically engaged with their hands and their minds.
- ✓ Inquiry: In this or another section of the activity, youth carry out one or more inquiry practices.
- ✓ Reflection: If appropriate, I will ask youth questions during the core activity that will help them make sense of what they are learning.
- ✓ Relationships: I will take steps to share my enthusiasm and create a nurturing, safe learning environment.
- ✓ Relevance: In this or another section, I will guide the youth in a sustained discussion of how the activity relates to their everyday lives.
- ✓ Youth Voice: In this or another section, I will allow youth the opportunity to make decisions about their learning experiences.

FINAL REFLECTION AND RELEVANCE (5 MINUTES)

Come back together as a group and partner share what was the date they collected.

- Did everyone see the same thing in their circle?
- What did you find that was unique?
- Why is it important for us to know the wildlife in our area?
- What are some ways we can protect wildlife in our area?

Facilitator Checklist for Activity Reflection & Relevance:

- ✓ Space Utilization: Again, I will use the space informally.
- ✓ Participation: I will prompt youth who do not have access to the activity to participate.
- ✓ Purposeful Activities: The closing section helps youth to reach the learning goal.
- ✓ Content Learning: I will help youth make connections between different ideas. I will create opportunities for youth to ask questions/provide ideas that show a deeper level of understanding.
- ✓ Inquiry: In this or another section of the activity, youth carry out one or more inquiry practices.
- ✓ Reflection. I will provide youth with a sustained opportunity to make sense of their learning.
- ✓ Relevance: In this or another section, I will guide the youth in a sustained discussion of how the activity relates to their everyday lives.
- ✓ Youth Voice: In this or another section, I will allow youth the opportunity to make decisions about their learning experiences.