

WILDLIFE ISSUES

The lessons in this unit are designed to help students understand the relationship between humans and animals in the natural environment. Students of all ages can discuss humane approaches to living with urban wildlife as well as human responsibility towards endangered animals. The goal will be for students to come to recognize the need for empathy and responsible action in maintaining a healthy environment for people and animals.

Younger students can learn the names of various species of wildlife, their relative size, their family structure and techniques for observing them in the wild. Topics to be studied by grades pre-kindergarten to three students might be infused into:

- Language Arts – Learn vocabulary to identify animals and their habitats. Use the word habitat correctly and describe forest, water and other habitats. Differentiate between living and non-living things. Understand the difference between wild and domesticated animals.
- Social Studies – Identify wild animals that live in the school community. Recognize the natural habitats of various wild animals. Recognize that some animals, like humans, live in family groupings in the wild.
- Science – Match wild animals with the places in which they live. Observe animals in natural habitats. Demonstrate respect for animals and their homes by leaving them unharmed. Recognize that human action can affect animals.
- Math – recognize that extinct means zero. Know that animal populations are decreasing due to human interference.



Older students can examine human interaction with animals in the wild including hunting, trapping, habitat loss and wildlife trade. The lives of wild animals that are brought into captivity including the capture of exotic animals as pets, and the use of animals in circuses, and whether or not animals should be kept in zoos can be explored. Topics to be studied and discussed, by grades four to six students, in a unit on wildlife might include the following:

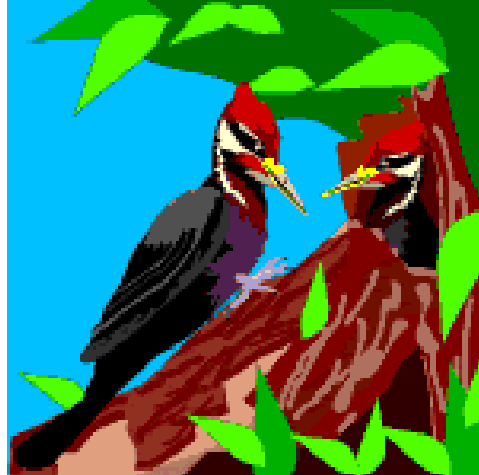
- Hunting – Is hunting today largely for food or for recreation? Which animals are generally hunted? What weapons other than guns are used to shoot animals? Is sports hunting -- the killing of wild animals as recreation – in sync or at odds with the values of a humane, just and caring society?
- Fur and Trapping – What methods used to raise and kill animals on fur farms? In the wild? Have synthetic fabrics -- known as faux furs eliminated the need to kill animals for their fur?
- Habitat Loss – How is wildlife habitat lost course due to urban development, oil and gas exploration and the conversion of land to agricultural uses? Which animals are routinely disturbed? How can people learn to live in areas where large wild animals such as bears once lived and may sometimes appear today?



- Wildlife Trade – How does the multi-billion dollar business threaten the survival of many species and results in the questionable treatment of billions of animals every year? How is wildlife used to produce products that people wear, eat and use in medical research?

- Captive Exotics and Wild Animals as Pets – How are wild animals captured? How long do these animals generally live as pets compared to their life in the wild? What kind of injuries have these animals caused to humans? What diseases do they carry that are transmissible to humans?
- Circuses – How are animals confined during travel and on performance days? Are they allowed to move naturally or to socialize with other members of their species? What methods are used to make them perform tricks? What do we learn -- if anything -- by watching them perform?
- Protecting Threatened and Endangered Species – Which species are listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act are protected in the U.S. by state and federal laws?

- Urban Wildlife – How do people act toward wildlife species in urban areas? Include such animals as deer, raccoons, woodchucks, squirrels, beavers, and birds in the discussion. What are humane solutions and inhumane solutions to conflicts with wildlife?
- Zoos – What do advocates and opponents think about zoos? Which zoos have “state-of-the-art” exhibits? Which animals are still kept in roadside zoos and menageries? Which zoos are accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA)? Do any of the AZA-accredited zoos contain exhibits that do not simulate the animals’ natural habitats in size and design?



Lesson plans have been developed to guide educators in leading classroom programs on some of the aforementioned topics. Additional information can be found at:

- www.hsus.org
- www.asPCA.org
- www.cwu.edu/~cwuchci/
- <http://fund.org/home/>
- <http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/greatapes/resources.html>
- www.janegoodall.org
- www.nahee.org
- www.uft.org/member/today/committees/humane
- <http://birds.cornell.edu/ppw/>
- www.wildwatch.org



