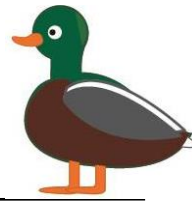


OVERVIEW

This activity is a challenging outdoor scavenger hunt that asks students to observe and find supporting evidence for statements about urban ecology.

MATERIALS

- Scavenger hunt worksheets (pages 4-6)
- Clipboards
- Pencil or pen



ACTIVITY

PART A:

Begin with students thinking about ecological connections. Write definitions for the vocabulary terms underlined below and include two to three examples of each. Can “humans” be included on any list?

VOCABULARY TERMS

An Herbivore is an animal that only eats plants.

A Carnivore is an animal that only eats other animals. They can be hunters, or scavengers that feed on dead animals.

An Omnivore is an animal that eats both plants and animals.

A Decomposer is a small creature that eats the remains of dead plants or animals. They are nature’s cleaners and play an important part in the environment.

A Predator is an animal that hunts for its food.

Prey are animals that are hunted for food.

Solar Energy is the power of the sun. Plants are able to collect this energy to make food. People are now also able to collect this energy using special equipment.

A Consumer is any living creature that eats something else. They include herbivores, carnivores, and omnivores.

THEME

Raise awareness of urban ecology and develop solutions to **coexist** with urban wildlife.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Collect, organize, and interpret data.
- Discover, observe, and recognize connections between living elements.
- Observe and evaluate the role wildlife has in urban ecosystems.
- Investigate the impacts human behavior can have on urban wildlife.

SUBJECTS

Biodiversity and humans, urban ecosystem relationships, human impacts on earth systems

SKILLS

Recognizing cause and effect patterns to define problems, science communication, project management for solution design

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND MATERIALS

Suggested for facilitator

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

A Producer starts every food chain. Producers are plants. They grow and make their own food using solar energy.

Minerals are the ingredients that make up rocks. They create the different colors and crystals you find in rocks.

Animal Scat is a word used by scientists to describe animal poop.

An Animal Track is a mark left behind as an animal moves across the ground. Mud, sand, and snow are the best places to look for animal tracks.

PART B:

Explore an outdoor area with students. A walk through the neighborhood, a school recess yard, or a local park are all great location options. Students will look for evidence that supports the urban ecology statements on the worksheets. Once real evidence is found, ask students to sketch what they see.

Upon completion discuss the activity together. Ask students to share what they found for each statement. Discuss statements where evidence could not be found. Can students think of examples for these? Where could they look next time? Look at the roles of humans in the ecology of an urban environment. Do we create more positive or negative relationships?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Students will work together on a stewardship and education project for their community. Revisit the worksheets; list examples of potential human-wildlife conflicts related to or directly from observations.

For example: “Humans and wildlife share the same habitat.”

- House sparrows are very adaptable and often create nests in unwanted areas such as in traffic lights or over doorways. Their noise and waste may be disagreeable to some.
- White-tailed deer can be found in neighborhoods and even private yards. Some residents enjoy their visits while others consider them a pest as they cause property damage by eating their plants or accidentally colliding with moving vehicles.

Working in small groups, choose three conflicts to focus on. Brainstorm as many solutions as you can by answering:

- How can humans lessen the impacts of or avoid the conflict?
- Are there benefits to this human-wildlife relationship, and/or to diminishing the conflict?

Have groups present their conflicts and solutions to the class. Peers can also offer additional solutions and ask questions. Next, select one conflict the group feels they can address and work to change or educate others about. Once selected, create a project outline as a group and include:

- Project mission and vision
- Method to monitor/record conflict and human/wildlife impacts
- Proposed solutions
- Assignments and tasks
- Role of community input and participation
- Can you involve other students or community members?
- Should local government officials be contacted?
- Project timeline: start date, deadlines for assignments/tasks, end date if applicable

As the facilitator, guide this project to fit within your time and resource constraints. Provide guidance so students' work can become a reality and provide a benefit to the community.

Humans and wildlife share the same habitat.

Humans and wildlife must adjust to their environment or move to a more suitable environment.

Wildlife is all around, even if it is not seen or heard.

Wildlife plays an important role in an urban environment.

Humans and wildlife experience some of the same problems.

Humans and wildlife utilize the same resources.