

Wildlife Observations

Subjects: Biology, Geography, and Mathematics

Objective(s): Students will create maps, practice their wildlife observation skills, and learn how to document their findings.

Material Needs:

Graph paper (for maps)

Pencils

3" x 5" index cards

Field guides

Binoculars (if available)

Activity/Instructions:

1. Explain to the students that wildlife management depends heavily on data collected from direct observation of wildlife. Whether the wildlife biologist is reintroducing a rare species or conducting population surveys, he/she uses direct observation data as the basis for decision-making.
2. Assign the class to groups of 3 to 5 students. Each group will act as a research team and gather observation data from a particular area – i.e. community park or other natural area. Make sure that each group observes a different area.
3. Each team will:
 - Visit their research area and draw a map of that area. Copies will be made of this map and used to record observational data.
 - Decide on a schedule in which each team member takes a turn at observing the area for a minimum of 30 minutes. To obtain a broader overview of wildlife species present in the area, regular observations should be conducted. Observation periods should be scheduled so that the area is watched morning, afternoon, and evening. Because of the need to watch throughout the day, it is suggested that the teams set up their observations for a series of 2 to 4 weekends.
 - Note and identify as many animal species as possible within their area while sitting quietly in one spot. The location and behavior of wildlife should be recorded (eating, storing food, nest-building, drinking water, traveling along cover corridors, etc.). Information can be recorded directly onto the maps or onto the 3" x 5" index cards.
4. At the end of the observation study period, have each group compile their data. Have them look for patterns or trends as to where different wildlife species were observed, when different animals were more active/visible/vocal, and what behaviors were most prevalent.
5. Each group can present their findings to the class, along with any knowledge they gained about how to design wildlife-friendly habitat near the school or their own homes (i.e. landscaping with plants that are favored by wildlife for food and cover, or adding a nearby water source).

SAMPLE MAP

