



WILDLIFE WATCH

TIME & AUDIENCE LEVEL

- 45 minutes—1 hour
- 4th—7th Grade
- Optional activities for older audiences

VOCABULARY

- Wildlife
- Habitat
- Biotic
- Abiotic

MATERIALS

- A nice place to sit where you can see wildlife
- A writing utensil
- Coloring utensils for drawing
- A journal template or paper to create a journal
- A camera (with sound and flash off) to take pictures of wildlife you see
- Binoculars if available
- Water to stay hydrated
- Sunscreen and bug spray as needed

SUMMARY

Discover wildlife from your own backyard! In this activity, students will take time to observe local wildlife and the environment around them. Along the way, they will construct and complete a Wildlife ID Journal using a template from the Georgia Sea Turtle Center. Students will record their experiences by drawing pictures and writing descriptions about what they see.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify local wildlife and observe natural behaviors
- Discover the features of local habitats (food, water, shelter, etc.)
- Record experiences through pictures and words

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It can be easy to get caught up in the fast-paced whirlwind of everyday life and forget to enjoy the world around you. For this activity, students will focus on slowing down and observing the wildlife in their local community (or even backyard). They may be surprised at the amount of wildlife they see that they normally don't notice. **Wildlife** is defined as living things that are neither human nor domesticated. When people take the time to sit still and watch wildlife, they may start to notice natural behaviors. These behaviors can include animals foraging for food, swimming in a stream, defending territory, singing a song, etc.

To record their experiences, students will be completing a Wildlife Watch Journal. A journal template is included with this activity. It is most effective to explain each page of the journal beforehand so that students can complete it themselves during their Wildlife Watch. The Georgia Sea Turtle Center journal template can be explained as follows:

The first page is about student and location information, have them fill this out first. After writing their name, the date, and the location of their Wildlife Watch, have students flip to the second page. This page is all about the habitat you are observing. A **habitat** is the place or environment that an animal naturally lives. Habitats are made of both biotic and abiotic things. **Biotic** means living, either previously or currently, and the biotic parts of a habitat can include things like plants, fallen logs, and fungi. **Abiotic** is the opposite of biotic, as it means non-living. The abiotic parts of a habitat can include: rocks, water, man-made structures such as a metal shed, etc. Let students draw the habitat from their perspective and include the living and non-living things they see.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:

- How does wildlife avoid being seen?
- What animals would I see if I tried this activity early in the morning or late at night?
- Would I see the same animals in the summer and the winter?
- How can I help protect the habitat I am seeing today?
- Will some animals survive better in this habitat than others?

STEM RESOURCES/NGSS

- Students can look at the migratory patterns of native animals and determine when they are able to see them.
- Repeating this activity at the same location once a week for several weeks will reveal seasonal changes and different animal behaviors.
- Using a computer program, students can log the animals they see each Wildlife Watch and figure out behavioral trends.
- Research and design safe bird houses and/or bird feeders to help out your native bird species.



Page three is where wildlife watching skills come in handy. Here, they will keep track of the wildlife they see. While watching, make sure to encourage students to look all around. Animals can be found in trees, in the air, in the water, and even popping up from holes in the ground. Remind students that the stiller they are the more animals they will see. On page four, they should count the total number of animals they see and draw their favorites!

If you're lucky, you may see some wildlife interactions. Animals will interact with each other in both positive and negative ways. Some animals, like deer, can often be seen socializing in groups. Other animals, like foxes, prefer to scavenge alone. Most animals have to worry about predators, and when they come into contact with one they may run away or choose to fight. Tell students to keep a close eye out for wildlife interactions and record any they see with either descriptive sentences or pictures of the encounter on page five.

To survive, all animals need food, water, and shelter. Some of the animals you see may be able to find shelter in your habitat, but can you figure out where they can find water to drink? Task students to identify where the water in their habitat is and how it got there. They can then draw the water source on page six of their journal! (Hint: sometimes the answer is rain and puddles)

Next, ask students to determine what food the animals they've seen today prefer to eat. Can they find this in your habitat? On page seven, students can draw the food items animals need and where they can be found. For example, if they saw some birds eating berries they may want to draw the berry bush. If they saw a snake slithering through the grass looking for insects, they may draw a grasshopper that was hopping near them.

There are some guidelines to keep in mind while watching wildlife. When students are picking a spot to sit, remind them not to travel off paths or crush vegetation. Let them know that they should watch from a respectful distance and not disturb the animals they see. When the activity is done, make sure students know not to leave any trash behind.

SET UP

This activity requires sitting still in a spot where one can see wildlife for at least 30 minutes. Wildlife viewing areas can include places like: forest clearings, the bank of a pond, a hiking trail, and many other places. However, completing this activity does not require going outside. In many cases, watching from a window or from a porch will also yield good results. If a student is not able to see or go outdoors, parents/teachers can help them get creative and hide stuffed animals or pictures around a room for them to find. For those that have computers with internet, there are many wildlife observation videos as well that can help complete this activity, but have an adult approve them first.

GEORGIA STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE (CONTINUED)

- GSS.S43
- GSS.S4La,b,d
- GSS.S5L1a
- GSS.S5L2a
- GSS.S6E4
- GSS.GS7L1a,b

REFERENCES

- www.wildlifelandtrust.org
- www.audobon.org
- www.nps.org
- www.nationalgeographic.com



CONTACT INFORMATION

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ACTIVY PROCEDURES

Print out the journal template or make your own journal prior to starting your wildlife watch. Make sure students have a writing utensil and a spot where they can comfortably write or draw. If they have a camera, it can be used to capture the cool animals that are seen. Binoculars can also be helpful when viewing wildlife that is far away. Plan ahead and bring water, sunscreen, and/or bug spray as needed.

Sit quietly and have students watch their surroundings for a few minutes. Students should be far enough from each other that they are not able to talk or be distracted. Encourage them to use their senses. What does the environment look like, smell like, and feel like? What sounds do they hear, both natural and unnatural? Once they have been immersed in nature for a few minutes, have them open the journal and begin to record their experience.

Allow students approximately thirty minutes to complete their journals. If they have questions, encourage them to raise your hand instead of calling it out, that way you can walk over to them and whisper and avoid disturbing the wildlife or other students.

WRAP UP/CONSERVATION MESSAGE

Once students have finished their Wildlife Watch, give them time to reflect on their experience and write down their favorite part on the last page. Invite students to share their favorite part with each other. Ask if anyone saw an animal they had never seen before, or if anyone was surprised at how much wildlife they saw today. Let students know that even though this exercise is done, they can continue to observe wildlife in their free time. However, they should be reminded that they should keep a respectful distance from animals and leave no trash behind.

After reminding students about how to safely watch wildlife, work as a group to come up with other ways they can help animals and their habitats. Some great ways include: picking up trash and organizing clean ups, staying on trails and pathways, not taking animals out of their natural environment, reducing the amount of single-use plastics they use, and educating friends and family about how they can help too.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Keep watching wildlife! Students can repeat this activity on their own. This can be done in different locations and at different times of the day. They will likely see different animals and no Wildlife Watch is ever the same!
- Practice wildlife photography skills! Now that students are experts at watching wildlife, they have the opportunity to capture some really cool wildlife moments. Just make sure the flash and sounds are turned off to avoid disturbing wildlife.
- Get to know individual animals! Watch the animals you see often and you may start to notice behaviors like building a shelter or foraging for new types of food as the seasons change.

WILDLIFE WATCH JOURNAL

Wildlife is all around you, no matter where you are!

Pick a nice spot where you can see wildlife. This can be by your window, on your porch, at a park, or on a nature trail. Stay in this spot for at least thirty minutes and record what you see in these pages.

Name:

Date:

Location:



HAPPY WILDLIFE WATCHING!



1

HABITAT DISCOVERY



Where wildlife lives is called a habitat! Habitats are made of living and non-living things. You may see plants, water, rocks, and other structures. These make up your habitat, draw it below!

2

WILDLIFE COUNT



Keep track of the animals that you see!

Mammals:

(Deer, Squirrels, Raccoons, Mice, etc.)

Reptiles:

(Snakes, Alligators, Lizards, Turtles, etc.)

Amphibians:

(Frogs, Salamanders, Newts, etc.)

Birds:

(Owls, Songbirds, Hawks, Herons, etc.)

Other:

(Fish, Insects, and any other cool animals you see!)

3

DRAW SOME WILDLIFE!



How many animals did you see today? —
Draw some of your favorites here!

4

FRIEND OR FOE?



Animals interact with other animals all the time. Some animals have friends they hang out with and bigger animals they hide from. What animal meetings did you see today? How did the animals react?

5

WONDERFUL WATER



All animals need water to survive. Water can be in the form of a pond, a stream, a puddle, and even the rain! Where did you see water in your habitat today? How do you think it got there?

6

SNACK TIME



Animals love snacks too! What types of food do the animals you saw today like to eat? Draw some of the tasty snacks animals may be able to find in your habitat.

7

KEEP GOING!



You can continue to observe wildlife and the natural world around you! Here's a tip: try it at different times of the day – you may see new animals!

What was your favorite part about your Wildlife Watch Experience?

8

