

Keep Wildlife Wild!



**A Lesson Plan for
Grades 4-6**

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Bureau of Wildlife Management



and

**Wildlife Rehabilitation
Advisory Council**

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Intro



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A young wild animal's best chance of survival is with its mother.





Keep Wildlife Wild

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With additional approvals by:

- 🦌 WDNR Wildlife Policy Team
- 🦌 Keep Wildlife Wild Team





Intro



Rebecca Zerlin with Great Horned Owl at Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Texas

In the State of Wisconsin, only people with appropriate licenses and permits are legally allowed to keep sick, injured or truly orphaned wild animals in captivity for longer than 24 hours.





Intro

Dear Wisconsin Teacher

Thank you for your interest in teaching about Wisconsin wildlife!

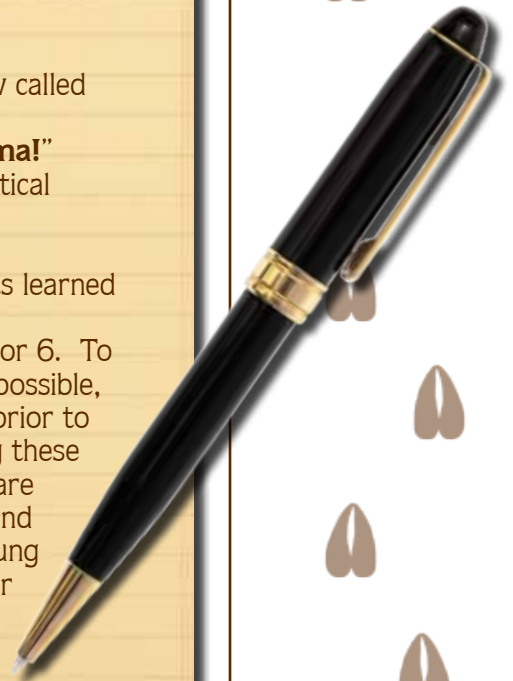
Wildlife is one of our state's great natural resources. Wild animals are valued by many people and we all share in the responsibility to conserve wild animals for current and future generations. Wisconsin's year-round outdoor activities often provide us with direct opportunities to view and appreciate this wonderful natural resource. It is important, however, for children (and adults) to understand the importance of observing wildlife from a respectful distance in order to keep these animals wild.

This lesson plan includes:

- ♣ a 20-minute scripted PowerPoint slide show called "**Keep Wildlife Wild**"
- ♣ a classroom activity called "**What a Dilemma!**"
- ♣ an optional reading assignment involving critical thinking
- ♣ Project WILD activity adaptations
- ♣ word games & puzzles to reinforce concepts learned

These activities can be readily adapted to grades 4, 5 or 6. To make this lesson plan as relevant to your students as possible, we suggest you conduct the activities in early spring, prior to the appearance of young birds and mammals. Sharing these activities from late March through mid-April will prepare children for the upcoming season of wildlife renewal and the potential encounters they may experience with young animals. However, if this time frame is inconvenient for you, feel free to use it anytime of the year.

Keep Wildlife Wild
Lesson Plan Subcommittee







INTRODUCTION





Intro



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Canada Goose family dreamstime.com



Raccoon dreamstime.com

Spring and early summer are the seasons of the year when your students are likely to encounter young wild animals.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is a “wild” animal? How does a wild animal differ from a domestic animal? Wild animals, collectively referred to as “wildlife,” live in native, wild or natural habitats and can freely roam on their own and find all the food, water and shelter they need to survive. Wild animals can live without the direct influence of people, although they may accept some help (such as nesting structures, sunflower seeds, suet). They have developed behaviors and adaptations to make them successful in surviving in complex wild environments. They are not well-adapted to living in your house.

A few examples of wild animals living in Wisconsin include white-tailed deer, coyote, gray fox, raccoon, opossum, cottontail, gray squirrel, woodchuck, eastern chipmunk, bluebird, cardinal, black-capped chickadee, Canada goose, painted turtle, snapping turtle, garter snake, green frog, and American toad.

Domestic animals have been selectively propagated and nurtured by people over many generations. Historically, in the domestication process, our ancestors took wild species and selected for special characteristics such as size, shape, color and the ability to live in close proximity to people and other domestic animals without showing the aggression typical of wild animals. Most domestic animals are used by people in some way, and they often develop bonds with people. Pets, such as dogs, cats, hamsters and parakeets, are domesticated animals traditionally kept for pleasure and companionship.

What’s wrong with keeping a wild animal as a pet? Most people lack the detailed knowledge and extensive training required to adequately care for wild animals in captivity. They do not understand the behavioral, social, nutritional and psychological needs of wild animals and, in particular, how to meet the very specialized needs of young wild animals--needs that are usually met in the wild by the animal’s mother. Here are the six main reasons to **Keep Wildlife Wild**:

- 1. Proper Food:** Wild animals have specialized dietary needs not easily met in captivity. Young wild animals especially require a specific, complete diet; otherwise they are at a high risk of suffering serious nutritional deficiencies that can leave them handicapped for life. Without the proper training, most people do not know what wild animals require to survive and thrive.
- 2. Increased Stress:** Wild animals require space and freedom that they don’t have if kept in a house or a backyard cage. Such captive environments can be very stressful for wild animals not accustomed to living in confined areas.



Intro





Intro



Stress can cause captive wild animals to become sick and even die from the tremendous amount of anxiety they encounter in captivity.

- 3. Habituation:** Young wild animals learn survival skills and normal social behaviors from their wild parents. When held in captivity, they become abnormally accustomed to human activity and often learn abnormal behaviors from people or domestic animals. They lose their natural fear of people and predators. Such animals will likely not survive when released back into the wild because they have not learned the correct survival skills.



Family dog with raccoon kits Shutterstock.com

People and household pets cause captive wild animals to become greatly stressed. In addition, captive wild animals often lose their natural fear of people, pets and predators which is not a good trait to have once they are released back into the wild where they belong.

- 4. Dangerous Wild Behavior:** As young wild animals grow into adults, their natural survival instincts kick in and they may demonstrate aggressive, dangerous behaviors that can threaten the safety of people and domestic animals. Wild animals are not domesticated or tame and are much less predictable than pets or livestock. They have a greater tendency to bite, kick, scratch or attack people, including children, guests or neighbors. Car horns, ambulance sirens, fireworks or other unexpected loud noises typical of the human environment may startle captive wild animals and cause them to panic. Just as owners of domestic pets are responsible for the actions of their domesticated companions, so are those who illegally keep wild animals in their home or backyards.



5. Disease: It is an unfortunate fact of life that SOME wild animals may carry diseases (such as rabies, canine distemper, mange, and salmonella) that are dangerous and sometimes deadly to people or pets. When animals are healthy, they behave normally, which means that they shy away from people. But if they become sick, diseased animals may appear confused and disoriented as they wander aimlessly about. An additional concern with some diseases, such as rabies and distemper, is that the infected animals often act as though they have lost all their natural fear of people to the point of appearing tame. These behaviors may tempt an unknowing person to pick up a wild animal. **But P-L-E-A-S-E ...NEVER do so!!!**

6. It's Illegal: Keeping wild birds and mammals (and some reptiles and amphibians) captive as pets is illegal in Wisconsin and most other states for the reasons mentioned above. Wisconsin state laws--and for most wild birds, federal laws--closely regulate facility standards and training requirements, and require careful reporting for any person who is licensed or permitted to keep wild animals. These laws regulate the exact size of cages required to keep each type of wild animal confined. The average person does not have the appropriate holding facilities to keep a wild animal safely and properly confined. Wisconsin's captive wildlife regulations allow a person to possess a wild animal for up to 24 hours for the purpose of transferring that animal to an appropriately licensed individual, such as a licensed wildlife rehabilitator or a veterinarian. Even though young wild animals are cute, they should never be viewed as pets. It's illegal and not the right thing for the animal.

Some people wrongly keep wild animals as pets. They are either unaware of regulations that have been adopted to keep wildlife healthy and free from captivity, abuse and neglect or are unwilling to follow the rules. These individuals often claim that *their* situation is different and that they are the exception to the rule. Unlawful keepers of wild animals often say "**MY** raccoon (or **my** skunk or **my** fox) is different...

It loves me and would never hurt me!" This may be true...until the day it isn't. Wild animals held in captivity can exhibit unpredictable and dangerous behaviors. There have been numerous cases in Wisconsin where captive wild animals have caused severe injuries to people and domestic animals. Please help your students learn the proper ways of interacting with wild animals. It could save a life!



Raccoon Shutterstock.com



Intro

