

# Keep Wildlife Wild

A Lesson Plan for  
Grades 4-6



Bureau of Wildlife Management



and

**Wildlife Rehabilitation  
Advisory Council**

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**P**ROJECT WILD  
CONNECTIONS





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# Project WILD Connections

If you or another teacher in your school or district has been trained in the national curriculum called **Project WILD**, you may find it helpful to adapt some of the activities in the **Project WILD** manual to fit the needs of your classroom's **Keep Wildlife Wild** program.

Below is a list of activities from the 2002 **Project WILD K-12 Curriculum & Activity Guide** with suggestions of how you may adapt them to the topic the concepts in **Keep Wildlife Wild**.



**What's Wild?** (Grade 4; Page 7): Students locate, classify and construct magazine photo collages of wild and domesticated animals. This activity reinforces the definitions of wild and domesticated animals as described in the **Keep Wildlife Wild** lessons.



**Animal Charades** (Grade 4; Page 280): Students are given the names of wild and domesticated animals (the teacher may add in some characteristics of the animal on the name card). Each student is given a short period of time (10-20 seconds) to dramatize his or her selected animal. This activity reinforces the definitions of wild and domesticated animals as described in the **Keep Wildlife Wild** lessons.



**Wildlife is Everywhere** (Grade 4; Page 51): Springtime is a wonderful time of year for a short "field trip" around your schoolyard, school forest or local city park. Adapt this **Project WILD** activity so that students not only search for common wild animals living in or near places where people live, but also look for signs of young wild animals (tree squirrel kits, cottontail kits, broods of mallard ducklings or Canada goose goslings, an American robin nest in a tree, a chipping sparrow nest in a small bush, an eastern phoebe or barn swallow nest under the eaves of a building, etc.).



**What's That, Habitat?** (Grade 4; Page 56) & **Everybody Needs a Home** (Grade 4; page 59): Wild animals, as opposed to domesticated animals, can find all their food, water, shelter and space completely on their own. These two **Project WILD** activities are very similar. Basically, each requires the student to draw either their house or a floor plan of their house showing where they get their food, water, shelter and space. Then they draw a similar diagram for a wild animal. Adapt either activity by asking students to draw the habitat "floor plan" or "house" of common birds and mammals of the urban environment. For either activity, ask them to consider the location of the animal's **nursery** (where the young animals are born and raised). Have them consider where a cottontails, gray squirrels, raccoons, white-tailed deer, woodchucks, mallards, Canada geese, American robins or house wrens would locate their nursery.

**Beautiful Basics** (Grade 4; Page 58): Label three columns on a dry eraser board; "People," "Domesticated Animals," and "Wildlife." Ask students to list all the things that these three groups of animals (people are mammals, too!) need to survive. Group similar concepts into food, water, shelter or space. Compare the needs of all three groups of animals.

**Too Close for Comfort** (Grade 4; Page 300): To help students understand levels of stress that young wild animals endure when they are held by people or are put in situations where they are too close to household pets and children, students are encouraged to assume the role of a young wild animal that commonly lives near people. They can experiment with different physical distances and levels of comfort and then hypothesize about other indicators of discomfort when wild animals are held captive.

**Environmental Barometer** (Grade 4; Page 77) & **Habitrekking** (Grade 4; Page 79): Both **Project WILD** activities involve short "field trips" around the school yard, school forest or local city park where students observe, count and/or collect data on the wild animals they find. Adapt this activity so that students focus on **young** birds, mammals, tadpoles, turtles, snakes, etc.



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**Thicket Game** (Grade 4; page 114): Young wild animals have amazing adaptations that help them survive. Some young wild animals, like cottontail kits and fawns of white-tailed deer, are on their own at a very early age. They have innate abilities to evade predators. Predators must teach their young the skills of stalking and listening for their prey. In this game, one blindfolded student becomes the “predator” and the rest of the class becomes “prey.” After counting to 20, the “predator” removes the blindfold and uses all senses to try to detect the prey hidden from view. Adapt this game of “hide ‘n seek” to include young animals common to our urban environments and their natural predators, such as cottontail kits and red fox, white-tailed fawns and coyotes, or gray squirrel kits and red-tailed hawks. You may toss in a player or two who portrays an on-the-loose cat or dog running wild among the “prey” trying to capture the “prey.” Play this game first in a rather open area with minimal hiding places and a second round in a forested environment with more places in which the “prey” may find cover. Consider the survival challenges that young wildlife face in environments filled with people and on-the-loose pets.

**Habitat Lap Sit** (Grades 5 & 6: page 61): Use this very fun, physical activity to reinforce the concepts of **habitat** (Food, Water, Shelter, Space). Adapt the activity by focusing on the needs of young wild animals, and what challenges they may face in environments near people (e.g., housing construction has destroyed the space in which a white-tailed doe usually hides her fawn; mowing has destroyed a cottontail kit’s nest; a disease has killed a tree near a house and the homeowner cuts down the tree that contains a squirrel den; a homeowner has not kept his or her birdfeeder clean and the food has become contaminated with salmonella bacteria; a homeowner sprays herbicides near a small pond polluting the water. etc.). Use this activity to reinforce the concept that wild animals living near people experience a variety of problems that may leave their young in jeopardy.



**Oh Deer!** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 36): This game of tag can be adapted to reinforce the concept that wild animals are not dependent on people for their survival but have the ability to find the essential elements within a habitat that they need to survive and that those basic elements include food, water, shelter and space.

**Quick Frozen Critters** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 122): Young wild animals have amazing adaptations to help them survive. Some young animals, like cottontail kits and white-tailed fawns, are on their own at a very early age. They have innate abilities to evade predators. Adapt this fast paced game of “freeze-tag” to include young animals common to our urban environments and their natural predators, such as cottontail kits and red fox, white-tailed fawns and coyotes, or gray squirrel kits and red-tailed hawks.

**Interview a Spider** (Grades 5 & 6; page 12): This activity can be adapted two ways to reinforce concepts learned in the **Keep Wildlife Wild** lesson plan. In both options, students will use news reporting techniques to develop a list of questions to ask their assigned “guest.” In option one, their guest is a young wild bird or mammal common to the urban environment. Have students develop questions that focus on the challenges such young animals face living around people and pets-on-the-loose. In option 2, students conduct research on what the job requirements and duties are of adults whose career involves working with wild animals such as a wildlife rehabilitator, wildlife veterinarian, zookeeper, wildlife biologist, wildlife technician or wildlife researcher. They may conduct their research either online or by reading some of the books in the **Suggested List of Books** section on pages 35-42 of this **Keep Wildlife Wild** lesson plan.

**My Kingdom for a Shelter** (Grades 5 & 6; page 28): Adapt this activity in which you take a short “field trip” to your school yard, school forest or local park. If using a non-school property, always seek landowner permission first. Have the students gather some natural materials such as grass, twigs, leaves, soil, moss, pieces of bark or even stones. Remind them not to touch or damage real nests or dens and not to collect feathers (though you may provide



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feathers from domesticated birds that you purchased from a craft store). Back in the classroom, assign each student to a different wild animal that commonly lives near people and ask them to construct a nest or den in which their animal would raise young. Ask them what challenges young wild animals face in the built environment.

**Polar Bears in Phoenix?** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 125). While this particular **Project WILD** activity focuses exclusively on Polar Bears, the heart of the activity concentrates on student ability to consider and identify potential problems when a person takes a wild animal out of its natural habitat and into captivity. The original **Project WILD** activity states: *“The major purpose of this activity is for students to recognize that animals are adapted to the environments in which they have lived for a long time. If people move animals to environments different from those for which the animals are adapted, then special attention must be paid to creating conditions in which the animals can live.”*

Adapt this activity by selecting those birds, mammals, reptiles or amphibians (and/or their young) that commonly live near people (such as the American Robin, Barn Swallow, Eastern Phoebe, House Wren, Bluebird, Mallard, Canada Goose, Gray Squirrel, Raccoon, Cottontail, White-tailed Deer, Red Fox, Coyote, Painted Turtle, Garter Snake, Toad, etc.). Ask your students to design--either by drawing on paper or constructing a shoebox diorama--three settings for their assigned animal:

- 1) the animal’s normal, native, natural habitat
- 2) an enclosure that may be provided in an average person’s home or backyard
- 3) an enclosure provided by a licensed wildlife rehabilitator or zookeeper when a wild animal is brought to that person’s home or facility.

Ask students to list some of the important features they should consider when designing an enclosure provided by people: the enclosure’s size and shape, the materials used in the construction of



the enclosure, design elements needed to prevent accidental escape, environmental conditions (temperature, humidity, color of enclosure, light intensity and length of exposure, air pressure, wind velocity and direction), the types of receptacles used to contain food and water, maintenance concerns such as type of floor covering, slope of floor, ability to clean the enclosure adequately (e.g., are there floor drains?); where the captive wild animal will be kept while its enclosure is being cleaned.

Refer your students to pages 20-21 in **Wildlife Rehabilitation in Wisconsin: An introduction and study guide** which describe the facility standards that must be adhered to by persons legally licensed to hold wild animals captive. This publication is found online at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/documents/RehabGuide.pdf>

**Adaptation Artistry** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 128): The **Keep Wildlife Wild** program discusses the fact that young wild animals possess amazing adaptations that help them survive, sometimes even in the absence of a wild parent. Rather than having students draw or sculpt *imaginary* wildlife, have them first research the survival adaptations of young wild animals that commonly live near people and then invite your students to design their selected animal emphasizing those special adaptations.

**Cartoons and Bumper Stickers** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 192): Adapt this activity by asking students to design one of several options:

- public service announcement (for a newspaper, website or radio)
- cartoon
- billboard
- bumper sticker

that encourages people to **Keep Wildlife Wild**. If space allows, they should include information about where people may turn to for help should they find a sick, injured or truly orphaned wild animal.



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**Power of a Song** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 194): Adapt this activity so that your students (in small groups or as a class) create a song with the title **Keep Wildlife Wild**. The song should have **Keep Wildlife Wild** in the chorus and incorporate into the verses some of the messages they learned in the **Keep Wildlife Wild** activities.

**Animal Poetry** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 282): Adapt this activity by asking students to pick a wild animal that commonly lives near people's homes (or farms) and write two poems (Haiku, Cinquian or Diamante): One poem should represent the young of their selected wild animal and the other poem should represent the adult of that wild animal. How and why are these poems similar or different?

**For Your Eyes Only** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 197): Each person holds a unique view of wildlife. Adapt the basic concept of this **Project WILD** activity by asking students to role play people with different attitudes and viewpoints (use those viewpoints listed on pages 198-199 in the **Project WILD** activity guide). These include political, economic, religious, ecological, scientific, cultural, educational, aesthetic, social, recreational, egocentric, health-related, ethical/moral, historical, anthropocentric, biocentric, philosophical viewpoints. Create a scenario in which a young wild animal (seemingly in need of help) has been found. You may use one of the **Keep Wildlife Wild Dilemma Card** scenarios (beginning on page 46 of this lesson plan) or create one of your own. Assign a particular viewpoint to each student, then ask each student to role play how he or she would handle the scenario considering the viewpoint they are representing. Remind students to respect the rights of others to express different attitudes and viewpoints.

**Changing Attitudes** (Grades 5 & 6; page 255): Adapt this **Project WILD** activity by asking students how people's attitudes toward some animals that live in close proximity to people (e.g., geese, ducks, deer, squirrels, etc) have changed over time. Also, have students discuss how people's attitudes toward young wild animals are the same or different from their attitudes toward adult wild animals.



**Let's Talk Turkey** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 248): One of the concepts in the **Keep Wildlife Wild** lesson plan is the difference between wild and domesticated animals. All domesticated animals originated from some wild ancestor. This **Project WILD** activity focuses on the origin and development of the domestic turkey from the wild turkey. You may adapt this activity by asking students to investigate the history of domestication of ducks, geese, cats, dogs and other common domesticated animals. How do the domesticated varieties differ from the original wild ancestor?

**Ethi-Thinking** (Grades 5 & 6; page 303): Adapt this activity to slightly higher grades than those suggested by the original **Project WILD** activity. Ask students to consider people's activities and how some activities either help or harm wild animals. Ask students to also consider activities that may result in wild animals becoming sick, injured or orphaned. Examples of activities that may **help** wild animals include providing plenty of good wildlife habitat in one's backyard, voting to increase the number of acres of parkland in urban areas, using organic principles in caring for lawns and gardens, and maintaining nesting structures. Examples of activities that may lead to wild animals becoming sick, injured or orphaned include feeding human food to wild animals at parks, spraying poisonous herbicides or pesticides on lawns and gardens, pouring used motor oil down street drains, cutting down old or dead trees with nesting cavities, driving too fast near wetlands or wooded urban areas where wild animals tend to concentrate, chasing wild animals, destroying bird nests, erecting curbs and other structures that pose as barriers to the season migrations of wild animals like turtles, snakes, and broods of ducks and geese.



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**Migration Barriers** (Grades 5 & 6; page 308), **Changing the Land** (Grade 6; page 345), **Planning for People and Wildlife** (Grades 5 & 6, Page 436) & **Improving Wildlife Habitat in the Community** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 440): These four activities are similar and can be worked together as a unit. They consider the effects of people's actions--some positive, some negative--on wildlife. Negative impacts include:

- disrupting historical migration routes used by wildlife by:
  - constructing curbs or railroad lines that prevent turtles from reaching their nesting grounds
  - constructing new roads near wetlands where broods of geese and ducks frequently walk back and forth between daytime feeding grounds and nighttime resting places on the water
  - constructing roads slicing wetland areas that interrupt the historical migratory pathways between the wintering grounds and breeding grounds of salamanders, frogs, toads and snakes
  - erecting high fences where white-tailed deer historically migrated between feeding areas and places where does normally concealed their fawns
- fragmenting wildlife habitat by building of roads, snowmobile trails and housing developments or by clear-cutting large blocks of forest
- applying chemical herbicides and pesticides to lawns and gardens in the wrong concentrations or at the wrong times of the year

Positive impacts include:

- restoring native tallgrass prairies
- managing water levels in wetlands and ponds
- building wildlife overpasses and underpasses to allow wildlife to travel their traditional migratory routes
- building and installing nest structures

After a thorough discussion of the positive and negative impacts that people have on wildlife, ask students to design innovative ways that allow wildlife and people to co-exist such as building passageways to



assist wild animals in their migratory crossings through the human-built environment or constructing an Eastern Bluebird nestbox trail. For inspiration, consider the amazing examples of wildlife bridges and underpasses that people have constructed around the world to help wildlife move along their traditional migratory paths. Visit the following **You Tube** video for that inspiration:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2q\\_XzNz9v44](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2q_XzNz9v44)

**Wild Work** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 385): Expand this career-related activity by including the following wildlife-related occupations: Wildlife Biologist, Wildlife Conservationist, Wildlife Researcher, Wildlife Technician, Wildlife Educator, Wildlife Rehabilitator, Wildlife Veterinarian and Zookeeper.

**Litter We Know** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 434) & **Noisy Neighbors** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 317): Both of these activities may be adapted to the concepts described in the **Keep Wildlife Wild** program. Each activity considers the impact of people's behavior on wild animals. The main points are that high levels of artificially-produced noise can stress wild animals in urban environments and litter can cause wild animals to become sick, injured or orphaned.

**Enviro-Ethics** (Grades 5 & 6; Page 443): Adapt this activity in which students develop and use their own, personal, "Keep Wildlife Wild Code of Ethics." Based on the information learned in the **Keep Wildlife Wild** lessons, students outline the steps they need to take if they wish to **Keep Wildlife Wild**.



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