Lesson 5: Urban Wildlife

Overview: Students will consider ways to create spaces that are safe for both people and the wildlife with whom we share our neighborhoods.

Procedure:

Introduction
1. Introduce the topic by asking students what types of wild animals live in suburban and city neighborhoods, such as squirrels, ducks, chipmunks, frogs, birds, turtles, geese, and raccoons.
2. Let the students know that they might see some of these animals in parks, near the shore, or in their own backyards. Explain to the students that we share our cities, towns and neighborhoods with wildlife and it is important to think about not only our own safety around wild animals, but also how to make spaces safe for the wild animals themselves.

Guided Visualization
1. Let the students know that they are going to imagine what it is like to be a squirrel. Tell the students to imagine that they are turning into a squirrel. Ask them what they need to become a squirrel. Allow students to respond. (Possible answers: fur; whiskers; bushy tail; claws on their feet; little paws; dark eyes.)
2. Tell the students that you are going to pretend they are squirrels. Ask them to stand up and let them know that you are going to narrate what their day is like. See Squirrel Guided Visualization.
   
   Note: The students can act by miming the narration of the story. They should do this in one spot (i.e. pretending to climb up, running in place, etc.).
3. After you read the guided visualization and the students have imagined being a squirrel, tell them to imagine that they are turning back into a person and ask them to sit down again.
4. Ask the students the following questions about the guided visualization:
   - How did it feel to be a squirrel?
   - When we were squirrels, where were we? (Answer: Park.)
   - What does a squirrel need to eat to be healthy? (Possible answers: water; flower bulbs; nuts; mushrooms; seeds; pine cones; fruits.)
   - What were the good things about our habitat? (Possible answers: trees; open space; flowers; squirrel friends.)
   - What were the dangerous/scary things about our habitat? (Possible answers: litter; people chasing us; cars; bad food.)

Objectives
Students will be able to...
- Identify at least three ways to make urban habitats safer spaces for wildlife.

Time Needed
45–60 minutes
1 class period

Materials
- Squirrel guided visualization
- Pictures of wildlife
- Three sheets of large chart paper, one with a sketch of a backyard, one with a sketch of a park, and one with a sketch of a shore.
- Markers

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Lesson 5: Protecting Urban Wildlife (continued)

5. Sketch an outline of a park on the board (just a basic outline) and ask the students to brainstorm ideas for making the park safer. As students brainstorm ideas, illustrate their ideas on the board.

Possible answers:
- Lids on trash cans
- Recycling bins
- Native wild flowers
- Nut trees
- Signs that say “Respect the Wildlife”
- Speed signs that say only 15 miles/hour
- “Animal Crossing” signs by the road
- Squirrel feeders

Animal Habitats

1. Post three large pieces of paper on the wall. Each page will represent one of the following habitats: Backyard; Park; and Shore. You can sketch a basic scene to represent each habitat.

2. Each student will be given a picture of a wild animal and will have to think about which places s/he is most likely to see the animal. Ask the students to tape their animals to the correct habitats.

Note: It is okay to give the same animal to more than one student. Some animals might fit in both the park and the backyard.

3. Once the students have placed their animals in the habitats, review which animals are in which locations. Explain that the animals might face similar dangers that you experienced as the squirrel.

4. Let the students draw pictures to make the space safer for their animals. Let them use the park example that you did together as a guide to follow.

Wrap Up:

Ask the students what they can do today to help keep wildlife safe and protected.

Possible answers:
- Look at wild animals, but don’t touch them.
- Recycle and do not litter.
- Respect wild animals and don’t chase them.
- If you feed wildlife, like birds, provide food that is part of their natural diet, like seeds.
**Squirrel Guided Visualization**

Imagine yourself as a squirrel. Wiggle your nose; tap your feet; swish your tail.

You are sitting in a tree. You’re hungry. You look around the park below. You see birds hopping in the grass and people walking by. You scurry down your tree. Once you hit the ground, you pause. You pop your head up and look around. What’s that over there? Sniff, sniff- you smell food. You twitch your tail in excitement. You run over to see what it is: a plastic bag full of trash. You stick your head inside and sniff around. It smells good, but there doesn’t seem to be any food inside. You try to get out but are stuck. You panic, jumping about. Finally, you’re outside the bag, but it’s caught to your foot. You shake it off. Whew!

You see a trash can across the street. Trash cans are always good for some food! Take a cautious step into the street. You keep moving, but you’re confused. Where is the grass? The trees? Look around you.

What’s that sound? A car! Run! You’ve made it across the street, barely.

Start moving toward the trash can. As you move, a child runs out and begins to chase you. Time to run again! You zig zag your way down the street.

Good, they’re gone! You jump up to the brim of the trash can and peek inside. So many smells! You pull out some old food and lift it to your face. You give it a good sniff before eating. Smells nice! Dig in!

After you’ve eaten, you don’t feel so good. No, you feel very sick.

Slowly, you make your way back across the street and into the park. You climb back up into your tree and lay down on a branch. You start to feel a little better, but you think about the rough morning you have had. You decide to rest for a while.
Parks
Shores and Wetlands

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Streets and Backyards

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Humane Education Resource Guide
TeachHumane.org
Sample drawings for chart paper sketches

Parks

Shores

Backyards