

WELCOME WILDLIFE

On this Earth Day or any day of the year, think about ways in which people, even little people, can improve a habitat for our wildlife. Remind students that things of nature are not seen just in the wilderness or on National Geographic specials. Nature can be found everywhere if we nurture it. Encourage kids to learn about ways in which they can nurture wildlife and welcome it to their backyards.

Create A Habitat

Help children understand the concept of habitat by asking everyone to help in drawing a large picture of a house and surrounding yard on the chalkboard. Suggest that interesting details such as trees, shrubs, and gardens be included. Talk about the drawing and challenge students to make a list of all the

animals that might be found in the yard. Next to each item have kids write a word to identify where each lives or seeks shelter. Introduce the word *habitat* and explain that a habitat is where living things live and grow naturally. Use these ideas to help students begin:

- humanhouse
- cathouse
- doghouse
- squirreltree
- birdtree
- butterflyshrubs
- beetree, shrubs
- mosquitobirdbath, tree
- rabbitshrubs

Once Wildlife

Help children understand the importance of providing suitable habitats so that we can keep wildlife alive and healthy. It seems that many people like to

have buildings everywhere. The spread of developed land has devastated the rural ecology, caused the extinction of predators in some areas, and also jeopardized the habitat of many birds. Fragile plant species have been threatened and many butterflies are in danger. Woods, once home to songbirds, are often gone and turtles can no longer make it to their breeding sites because of busy roads. Entire communities of plants and insects have been nearly wiped out because many humans do not understand the web of relationships among all living things. Most people do not think of their backyard as an ecosystem. With manicured lawns and selected gardens, space is limited and shelter is scarce. Soil is infertile and spread with chemicals. A clean water supply is low and getting even lower. What this means is that there is often not enough food or water to keep wildlife healthy. Biodiversity, with its grand variety of life forms, is the key to the survival of the Earth. Loss of habitat is biodiversity's greatest threat.

Wildlife Wheel

Wildlife has four basic needs to survive in its habitat...space—to live, nest, and raise its young; shelter—a safe place to roost, hide, and be warm from severe weather; water—for drinking and bathing; and food—to live and grow. With the destruction of woodlands, backyards are important spaces that, with our help, can support wildlife. Take a few minutes to talk about each need and what it means to an animal. Space is the area in the yard where the animal can move about; shelter might be found in trees, shrubs, or under a deck; water could be found in a birdbath, a puddle, or even the dew on the grass in the morning; and food might be berries on a bush, grass, or even items grown in the

garden. Create a wildlife wheel to reinforce the concept of the four basic needs for all wildlife. To make the wheel you will need the wildlife reproducible patterns, a large paper plate, a small paper plate, glue, scissors, and a paper fastener. Begin by coloring and cutting out the wildlife pictures. Glue the pictures around the outer perimeter of the large plate. Color and cut out the basic needs circle and glue it to the small paper plate. Push a paper fastener through the center of both plates and secure. Ask children to write their name on the back of the wheel.



To use the wheel, have children name the wildlife and then spin the inner wheel of basic needs to each of the animals. Discuss where each animal might find the basic needs in your backyard.

Habitat Hunt

Make kids aware of the need to improve our habitat for wildlife by inviting them on a habitat hunt. Duplicate the habitat hunt page for each child. Have them cut it apart to make two lists and take one along on

your walk. As you hike along, make note of the vegetation and wildlife that surround your school and check the items you see on the list. Stop for a few moments to point out interesting observations and discuss what you see. Then use a large sketch pad and markers to create a map of the school yard, showing the location of trees, shrubs, flowers, pavement, walkways, etc.. Draw in any creatures you may have observed. Talk about projects the class can become involved in to improve your schoolyard habitat for wildlife. Have kids take home the second copy of the habitat hunt and a copy of the backyard map page. Ask children to observe their backyard in the same manner in which the class observed the schoolyard and instruct them to draw a habitat map of their backyard. Suggest that they share these with their family and talk about ways the family can make their yard ecologically-friendly.

Habitat Chat

Gardening for wildlife can become a fun family activity and also set the stage for a better way of living. Make a copy of the "Habitat Chat" page for each child so that kids can share the ideas with family and friends. Begin by folding the page on the dotted lines to form a booklet. Then ask children to illustrate and color each page. Talk about the many ways families can provide for wildlife, and encourage everyone to take the booklet home to get others interested in creating a habitat-friendly backyard through gardening.

Pause to Inspire

Spending time with nature is truly inspirational. Set aside some quiet time with your class to sit outside and take in the natural beauty of the outdoors. Talk about the sights and sounds of nature and how it feels and smells. Give each child

a pad and pencil and encourage them to write a journal entry or sketch a picture. Share an inspirational moment!

Wildlife Collage

Denise Fleming's *Once There Was a Wood* (Henry Holt) is an evocative, cumulative tale which examines the many kinds of wildlife that are endangered when land is developed. Ms. Fleming employs her signature technique of making her own paper from cotton rag fiber to create spectacular illustrations. An afterword with its suggestions of ways communities can provide for the basic needs of wildlife invites meaningful discussion. After reviewing the book, divide kids into groups and challenge them to create a wildlife collage. Suggest that they cut or tear colorful paper scraps to illustrate flowers, trees, animals, insects, etc. Then add the heading "Welcome Wildlife."

Habitat Programs

In 1973, the National Wildlife Federation began their Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program. This program provides basic guidelines to help people make their landscapes better habitats for wildlife. In recent years, a Schoolyard Habitats program was initiated. This program focuses specifically on the special needs of developing, using, and maintaining habitat-based learning sites on school grounds. Schools can apply for certification for the Schoolyard Habitats program or receive information, guidelines, and resources for their project by checking their website at:

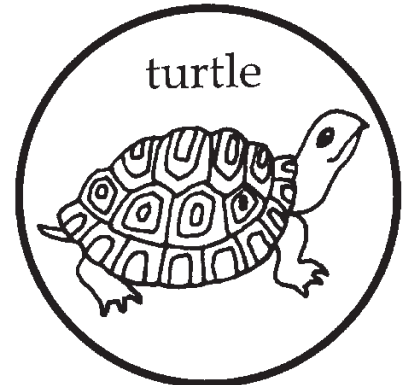
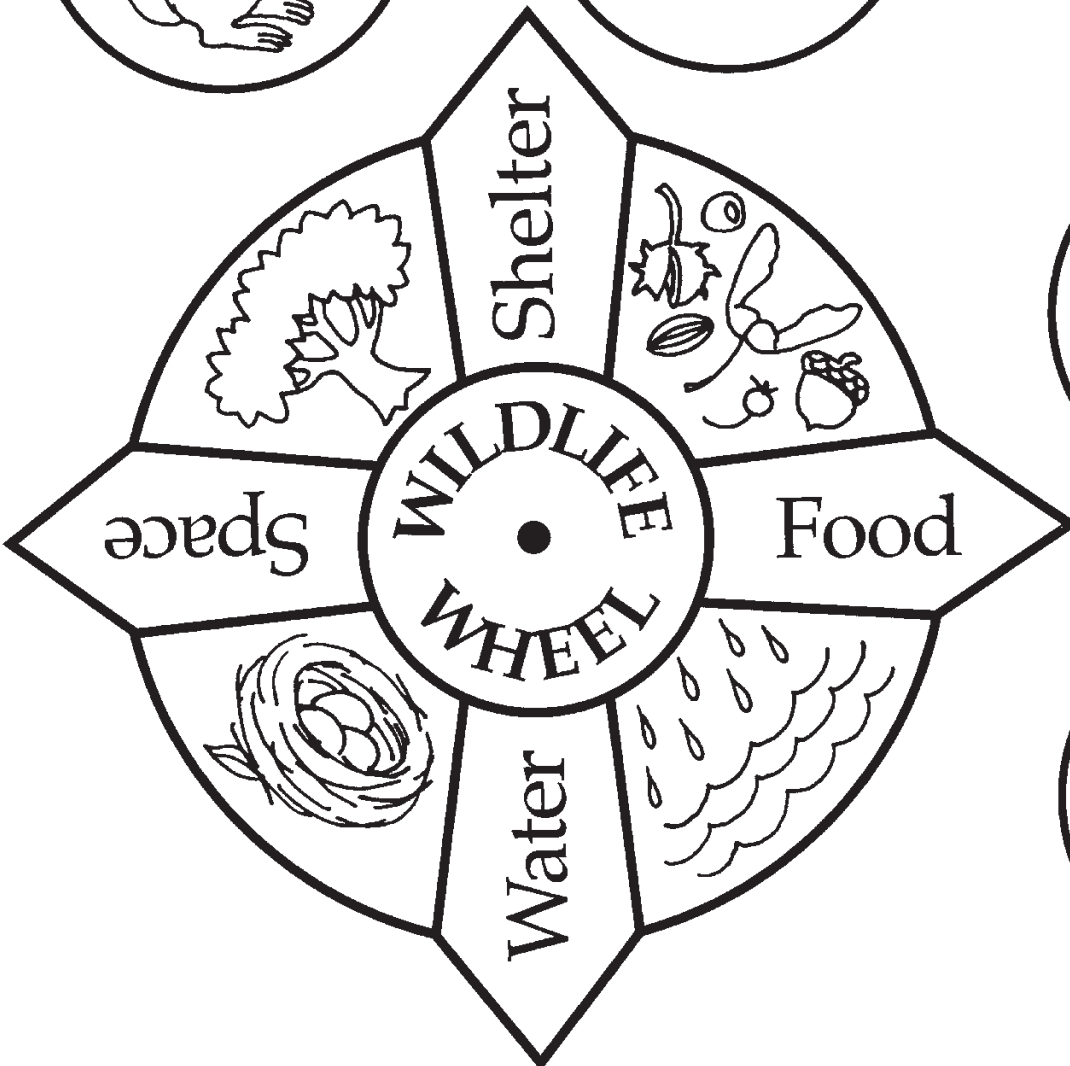
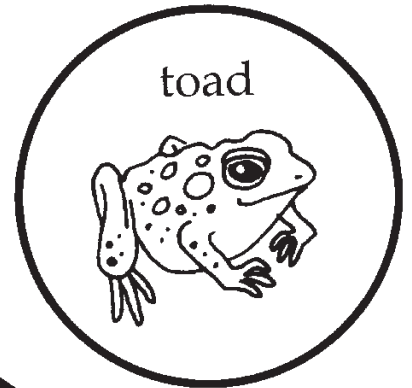
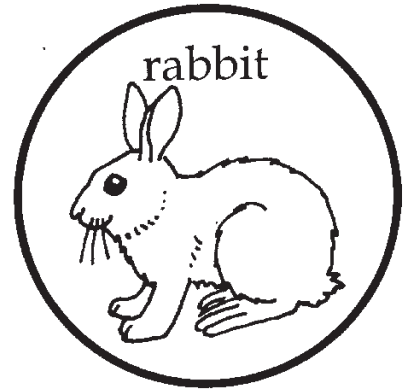
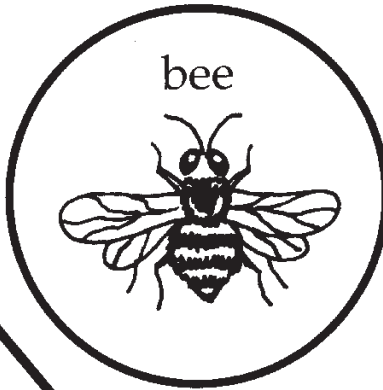
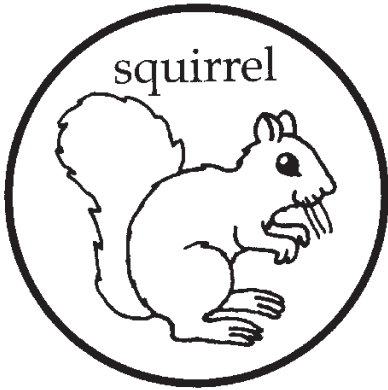
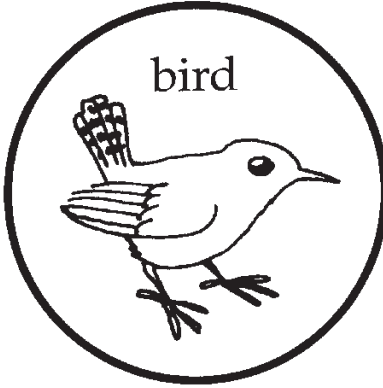
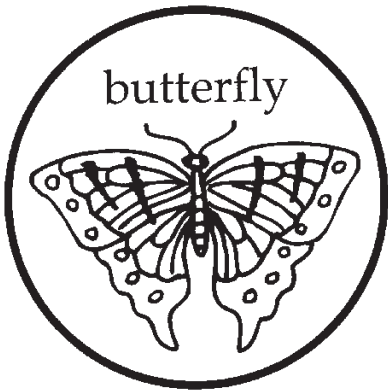
www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats/printnow.cfm

or

Find many interesting resources available on the National Wildlife Federation home page at:

www.nwf.org

Wildlife Wheel Patterns



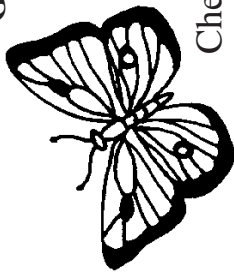
HABITAT HUNT

Going on a habitat hunt,

Wonder what I'll see.

Maybe a butterfly,

Or even a bee!



Check everything that you see
on your habitat hunt.

- bee
- butterfly
- bird
- ant
- pine tree
- maple tree
- oak tree
- weed
- squirrel
- chipmunk
- worm
- spider
- pond
- bush
- leaf pile
- grass
- toad
- rabbit
- ladybug
- turtle
- raccoon
- opossum
- mouse
- beetle

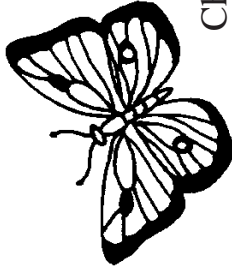
HABITAT HUNT

Going on a habitat hunt,

Wonder what I'll see.

Maybe a butterfly,

Or even a bee!



Check everything that you see
on your habitat hunt.











- bee
- butterfly
- bird
- ant
- pine tree
- maple tree
- oak tree
- weed
- squirrel
- chipmunk
- worm
- spider
- pond
- bush
- leaf pile
- grass
- toad
- rabbit
- ladybug
- turtle
- raccoon
- opossum
- mouse
- beetle

Name _____

My Backyard Map

What would an animal see if it was looking at your backyard?
Draw a picture of your backyard from an animal's view.



KEY Use these symbols to draw your map.	tree 	shrub 	flower 	grass 	rock 
	bug 	bird 	path 	water 	leaves 



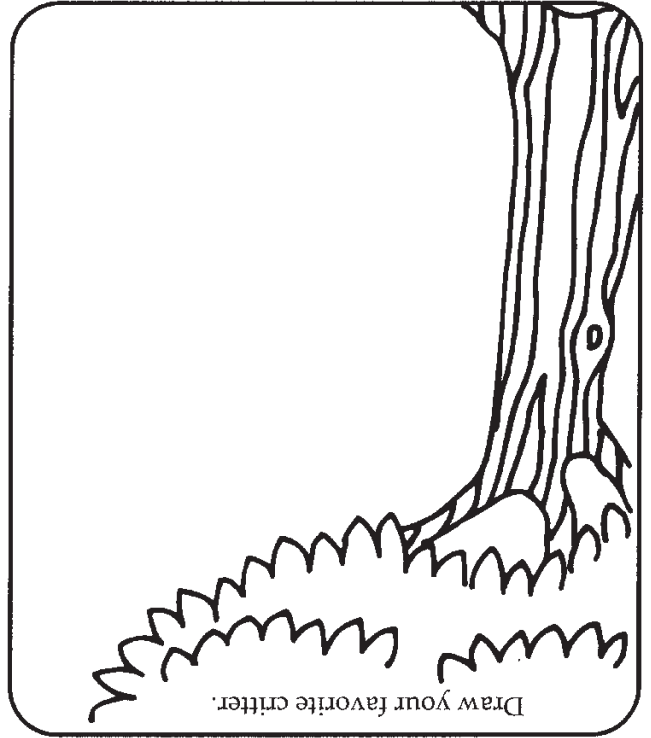
Draw a bird.

Plant shrubs and flowers
to welcome birds.



Draw a butterfly.

Plant flowers to welcome butterflies.



Draw your favorite critter.

Plant trees and shrubs
for food and shelter.

Together we can work to
help the wildlife in our
neighborhood.

1. Plant a flower garden for butterflies and birds.
2. Plant shrubs to give wildlife shelter.
3. Build a wall of rocks to give wildlife shelter.
4. Place a birdhouse and birdbath in your backyard.
5. Start a compost pile.
6. Invite toads, ladybugs, dragonflies, or bats to live in your yard. They can get rid of harmful pests.

HABITAT CHAT



Wildlife has basic needs. Animals need food, water, shelter, and space to raise their young. Everyone can help the wildlife around us.