

Wild Animal or Pet?

Pre Activity

Program at Nature Station: Keepers of the Earth Puppet Show

Grade Level: PreK – 2nd

Program Length:

Prep time: 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how easily teacher can find animal pictures

Activity time: 20-30 minutes for group activity;
1 hour if teacher does extension activity

Group Size: 20-30 students (one class)

Setting: Classroom

Vocabulary:

- wildlife – animals that live in nature and provide for their own needs (as opposed to domesticated animals, whose needs are provided by the people that take care of them)
- pet – an animal that people keep at home and take care of by providing it with what it needs

Materials: pictures of wild and domestic animals from magazines, calendars, classroom books, etc. (For extension activity: assortment of old magazines and calendars that can be cut up, scissors, poster board or large-sized construction paper, glue)

Background Information:

This activity is designed to help young children understand the differences between wild animals and pets. The teacher shows the children pictures of different types of animals, both wild and domestic. The children have to say if they think each one is a wild animal or pet. The teacher can talk with the class about what the differences are between wild animals and pets.

Most students know their dog lives in their house and that deer live in the woods, but they might not really understand the differences that make some animals wild and others domestic. Some animals sometimes live in people's houses but sometimes live in nature (for example, turtles). Are they wild or pets? What about animals on a farm that don't really live inside someone's house?

Wild animals are animals that live in nature and provide for their own needs. Wild animals survive on their own by finding their own food, water, shelter, and space. They are not taken care of by people. Wild animals can include squirrels, owls, deer, bears, fish, and even tiny animals like insects.

Domestic animals (or pets, to keep it simple for younger kids) are animals whose needs are provided for by people. People take care of domestic animals by providing them with food, water, shelter, and space. Domestic animals can include cats, dogs, gerbils, horses, and hamsters.

There are instances in which these definitions can be a little fuzzy, or depend on the situation. For example, some fish are wild animals and some are pets. Sometimes people capture wild animals and try to make them become pets, even though this is not a good idea. Sometimes pets get loose and roam wild in nature. Places like zoos keep and take care of animals that are generally thought of as wild animals. Your class discussion might result in some answers that: "It depends."

The main point to try to get across to students is that wild animals survive on their own in nature by providing for their own needs, whereas pets are animals whose needs are provided for by people.

Procedure:

1. Collect various pictures of wild animals and domestic animals (or pets). You can find pictures in magazines, calendars, classroom books, etc. If you do not have a source of any pictures, you could use clip-art. Ideas for animals to use: bear, domestic cat, domestic dog, cardinal (or other songbird), squirrel, horse, chicken, cow, goldfish, spider, butterfly, coyote or wolf, dolphin, owl, turtle, frog, skunk.
2. Tell students that you are going to show them pictures of different animals and they should tell you if each one is a wild animal or a pet.
3. After showing the students about 4 or 5 pictures, have a discussion about what the differences are between wild animals and pets. Do any students have pets? Do they or their parents do anything to take care of them? What do they do to take care of them? What about wild animals? What do they need to survive? Where do wild animals get their food, water, and shelter from? Who takes care of them?
4. Continue showing the students the rest of the pictures and ask them, now that they might understand the difference better, whether each one is a wild animal or not.
5. Can they think of any other examples of wild animals? Can they think of other examples of pet animals?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Bring in an assortment of old magazines, calendars, wrapping paper, and other things from which the kids can cut out animals pictures. You could also print out pictures from clip-art, if that is easier.
2. Divide the class in half.
3. Tell one half of the class that they will be making a collage of all wild animals. The other half of the class will be making a collage of all pets.
 4. The “wild animals” half of the class should look through all the pictures and cut out pictures of only wild animals. The “pets” half should cut out pictures only of pets.
 5. The kids can make a “wild animal” collage or a “pet” collage by gluing their pictures onto a piece of construction paper or poster board. Depending on how many pictures you have, you could have each student make his or her own collage, or they could make collages in groups. They should label their collage “Wild” or “Pets,” appropriately.

Assessment / Evaluation:

After the discussion about the differences between wildlife and pets, were the students able to correctly judge the remaining pictures? Did the students demonstrate their understanding by correctly putting wild animals in the “Wild” collages and pets in the “Pets” collages?