

2.1 - What Animals Live in Our Local Environment?

Story Extension for This Lesson:

Sam and Alex were asked to help the animals of the forest that are in danger. Before doing so, they must come up with a list of all the creatures that might live there. Sam and Alex need to help the forest, and you need to help them!

After reading the story about Sam and Alex in the forest, taking the class outside to see what animals live in your local area is a great way to Part 1 prior knowledge and further set the context for this unit.

Grade: 2

Strand: Growth and Changes in Animals

Big Ideas:

- Animals have distinct characteristics. (Overall expectations 2 and 3)
- There are similarities and differences among different kinds of animals. (Overall expectations 2)

Overall Expectations:

2. investigate similarities and differences in the characteristics of various animals

Specific Expectations:

2.1 observe and compare the physical characteristics (e.g., fur or feathers; two legs or no legs) and the behavioural characteristics (e.g., predator or prey) of a variety of animals, including insects, using student-generated questions and a variety of methods and resources

3.1 identify and describe major physical characteristics of different types of animals (e.g., insects, mammals, reptiles)

Inquiry Skills:

Observing, Recording, Gathering Data

Other 21st Century Skills

Utilizing digital technology (e.g. iPad or other tablet)

Instructions:

Part 1:

After sharing the story of Sam and Alex, brainstorm a list of animals that might live in the forest. Next, tell them that you are going to go for a walk outside, and that you want them to carefully observe their surroundings for signs of animals. Go over what makes a good observation: using various senses (in this case, mainly looking and listening) to detect details and characteristics about an item.

Part 2:

Take the class outside and go observing in a naturalized area, a nearby wooded area, or other suitable locale. Most schools, even those in cities, usually have some type of natural area within walking distance. Take along digital cameras or tablets and encourage students to take photos to capture their observations. What animals do they see, or hear? What evidence of animals can they see? For example, they might observe scat on the ground, burrow holes at the base of trees, leaves that have been eaten by insects, feathers or fur, or abandoned nests. Encourage students to look closely, including on the underside of leaves and under rocks, logs or other ground cover. You may also choose to take small containers in order to collect samples, such as soil samples with leaf detritus on top or small rotting logs that contain various insects.

Part 3:

Back in class, a slideshow of the images captured by students can be shared with the whole class, and a list of the various animals that were observed can be created. This list can then be compared to the original list that you made about 'What Animals Might We Find in a Forest?' and the class can look for similarities and differences.

Materials List:

- digital cameras or tablets
- chart paper and markers
- (optional) containers and small shovels to assist in collecting samples.

Subject Area:

Science

Connects to:

Grade 1, Grade 6

Connections:

Media Literacy, Visual Arts

Assessment Strategy:

A science journal is an excellent tool for students to record thoughts, observations, questions, and ideas throughout the unit.

At the completion of this activity, have students generate a science journal entry. You may wish to leave it open-ended, or you can provide specific prompts. Example prompts could be "List three animals that you observed outside. How did the animals shelter themselves?" or, "List three interesting observations that you made on our nature walk. Based on our walk, what questions do you have about animals and how they live?"