



Comparing Life Cycles

Outdoor Classroom Field Journal Activity Lesson Plans & Resources

Online Lesson Plans & Resources: <https://www.alabamawildlife.org/oc-activity-comparing-life-cycles/>

Students will explore the outdoor classroom to find and observe an animal, identify it, determine if it is an adult or offspring, and then compare and contrast the adult and offspring of the species.

Example Discussion Questions & Answers (online as an Interactive PowerPoint or PDF)

Q: Do all organisms have a life cycle? First, what is an organism?

A: *An organism is a living thing. An organism could be a plant like a wildflower, bush or tree, or it could be an animal like a human, salamander or spider.*

Q: Do all organisms have a life cycle? Second, what is a life cycle?

A: *Hint: A cycle is a series of events that repeat in the same order. A life cycle is the physical changes an animal or plant goes through during its life. Yes, ALL organisms have a life cycle.*

Q: What do all organisms' life cycles have in common? How does a life cycle start? What happens next?

A: *Birth - All plants and animals are produced by their parents. Growth – Plants and animals grow or change from “babies” to adults. Reproduction – Adult plants and animals can produce new babies. Death – All plants and animals eventually die.*

Q: Are all animals born the same way as we are? How are humans born? Do we hatch from an egg?

A: *No. Humans have live births from their mothers just like dogs, bats, manatee, raccoons and other mammals. Some animals do hatch from eggs like birds, butterflies, snakes and fish.*

Q: Do humans experience the same type of “growth” from a baby to an adult as other animals do?

A: *Some animals (like humans) do not physically change very much. They are born with all of the same body parts as the adults have. They just grow larger.*

Q: Do ALL animals experience the same type of “growth” from a baby to an adult as other animals do?

A: *No. Although some animals change little as they grow larger, others go through a complete metamorphosis (change) as they “grow” into adults. For instance, the common buckeye butterfly lays its eggs on leaves. Then, the caterpillar emerges from the egg and eats as it grows. The caterpillar then forms a chrysalis, and after a period of days the adult butterfly emerges with wings. Another example of metamorphosis is the southern leopard frog that lays its eggs in a pond or stream. Tadpoles emerge from the eggs without legs or lungs using gills to breathe in the water. Tadpoles grow legs, and as they lose their tails they emerge from the water with legs and lungs.*

Q: Do other animals take 15-20 years to grow to maturity or adulthood before they stop growing?

A: *No. Most animals reach their maximum growth in just a few weeks or months. Most caterpillars transform from an egg to a caterpillar and then to a butterfly in just a few weeks, and some tadpoles can morph into adult frogs in just four months. Eastern cottontail rabbits reach maturity (adulthood) in three months, while eastern box turtles reach maturity at 4-5 years.*

Q: Do all animals complete their life cycles in the same amount of time? Do they have the same “lifespan”?

A: *No, most humans live to be 70-80 years old, while an Eastern box turtle's life span is 30-40 years, an Eastern bluebird can live up to 6-10 years, and a common buckeye butterfly only lives for approximately 4-5 weeks from the time the egg is laid to its death.*

Q: What animals can we find living in our outdoor classroom? Which part of their life cycle could we find?

A: *Insects like ants or butterflies, birds like bluejays or northern cardinals, reptiles like lizards, amphibians like frogs, mammals like squirrels, and other “bugs” like spiders.*

