



# Critter Characteristics & Habitats

## Outdoor Classroom Field Journal Activity Lesson Plans & Resources

Online Lesson Plans & Resources: <https://www.alabamawildlife.org/oc-activity-critter-characteristics-habitats/>

Students look for a bird, insect, amphibian, reptile or mammal in the outdoor classroom, record its features, and then describe its habitat. Afterwards, they discuss how and why different animals were found in different places in the outdoor classroom.

The background information below can be used to help introduce the topic, engage the students, and build a foundation to discuss the topic:

### **Background Information**

There are many different types of living things on Earth including nearly one million different animals that have been identified and over 200,000 plants that have been identified according to the website ScienceDaily.com.

Different plants and animals are sorted or **classified** into groups based on their features and characteristics.

For instance, animals are divided into two main categories: **vertebrates** are those animals that have a spine or backbone and **invertebrates** are those without a spine or backbone.

Then the vertebrates are divided into five main categories including birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish.

Animals that have feathers and lay eggs are classified as **birds**, and animals with fur that have live birth are **mammals**.

**Reptiles** have dry, scaly skin and give birth to eggs on land, while **amphibians** have smooth, moist skin and lay their eggs in water.

**Insects** have 3 body parts, six legs and often hatch from tiny eggs.

Each type of animal has different needs for its survival and can only live in **habitat** (*an animal's natural home*) that provides the food, water and shelter that it needs to grow, reproduce and survive.

Those habitats can vary from woodlands/forests to meadows to deserts or from streams to lakes to oceans. Your school's outdoor classroom site should provide habitat for a wide variety of animals.

