



Alabama Wildlife Art Contest

ALABAMA OUTDOOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Grade Levels

K-12

Overview

Students will research a specific species of wildlife native to Alabama, and will depict that species in artwork.

Subject Areas

Science, Language Arts, Art

Duration

Research Activity: 2 hours

Art Activity: 2-8 hours (depends on complexity and medium of artwork)

Learning Objectives

Students will (1) research a wildlife species that is native to Alabama, (2) learn about the characteristics, natural history, and habitat requirements for that wildlife species, (3) determine if that species could use the school's grounds or outdoor classroom area for its habitat, and (4) depict that species in its habitat in a piece of artwork.

Materials

- ◆ Copies of "Alabama Wildlife Species Survey" (one for each student)
- ◆ Classroom set of Field Guides: *National Audubon Society Regional Guide to the Southeastern States*
- ◆ Artist Canvas, Boards or Paper (one for each student)
- ◆ Art Medium such as Watercolors, Acrylic Paint, Pastels, etc.
- ◆ Sketch Paper
- ◆ Pencils



Background Info

Alabama is one of the most biologically diverse places on Earth. The state ranks fifth in the nation in plant and animal diversity, and first in the nation in freshwater species diversity. This wealth of natural biodiversity stems from its diverse physiographic regions, abundance of water, and moderate climate.

Alabama is home to a wide variety of wildlife including the following:

- ◆ 70 species of amphibians including 40 species of salamanders and 30 species of frogs and toads;
- ◆ 85 species of native reptiles, including turtles, lizards, snakes, and one species of crocodilian.;
- ◆ 433 species of birds including ~158 that breed in Alabama, ~80 species that migrate through Alabama, and ~175 that are winter residents.
- ◆ 62 native mammal species including species such as white-tailed deer and gray squirrels with prolific populations that are managed with hunting practices;
- ◆ More than 450 species of fish with ~325 living in freshwater streams, lakes and rivers and another ~100 marine fish living along Alabama's coast; and
- ◆ Thousands of insect species including a wide variety of ants, butterflies, crickets, cockroaches, dragonflies, earwigs, fleas, grasshoppers, moths and more.

Unfortunately, Alabama has a high number of "at risk" and imperiled species, and only Hawaii has lost more species to extinction. The primary cause for the decline, extirpation and extinction of Alabama's wildlife is the loss of habitat that provides the food, water, shelter and places to raise young for Alabama's wildlife to flourish. Virtually all of Alabama's wildlife habitats have experienced some form of degradation and/or fragmentation due to modern agriculture and silviculture practices, residential and commercial development, creation of reservoirs by damming rivers, and expanding roads.

- *Info from OutdoorAlabama.com & EncyclopediaOfAlabama.com.*

In order to restore wildlife populations and habitat, we must study native wildlife species to determine their habitat needs. Naturalists, ecologists and artists observe wildlife in their native habitat, recording their behavior and characteristics. The "Alabama Wildlife Art Contest" activity allows your students to research a wildlife species indigenous to Alabama, study the habitat it relies on for survival, determine if that habitat currently exists or could be created on your school grounds, and record their findings as naturalists and artists do by sketching in a nature journal and depicting the wildlife in artwork.

Preparation

Collect the materials needed. Consider asking a local naturalist or wildlife biologist to talk with your students about the types of wildlife and wildlife habitat that could be found around your school and in your region of Alabama.

Procedure for Research Activity

- 1) Review the "Wildlife Species Habitat Survey" on page 4 with your students.
- 2) Pass out copies of local wildlife field identification guides, and ask your students to choose one specific wildlife species to research. You may want to divide your class or grade level into different "divisions" such as insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals or fish to ensure that students research different types of wildlife.



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Outdoor Classroom Connection

Students evaluate your outdoor classroom to determine if it provides habitat for the specific species of wildlife that they chose to research.

Literature Connections

- ⇒ *Kid' ' Easy-to-Create Wildlife Habitats* by Emily Stetson (ISBN: 9780824986650)
- ⇒ *Southern Wonder: Alabama's Surprising Biodiversity* by R. Scot Duncan (ISBN-10: 0817357505)

Wildlife Field Guides

- ⇒ *National Audubon Society Field Guide to Southeast United States* (ISBN-10: 0679446834)
- ⇒ *Forest Plants of the Southeast and their Wildlife Uses* by James H. Miller & Karl V. Miller (ISBN-10: 0820327484)
- ⇒ *Birds of Alabama Field Guide* by Stan Tekiela (ISBN: 10-1591931517)

Wildlife Magazines

- ⇒ *Alabama Wildlife* by the Alabama Wildlife Federation
- ⇒ *Outdoor Alabama* by the Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

Discovering Alabama Video

- ⇒ *Alabama's Natural Diversity*

Websites

- ⇒ Outdoor Alabama's *Watchable Wildlife*
- ⇒ Discovering Alabama's *Ask the Expert*



Research for Art Activity continued...

- 3) Provide two 30-45 minute sessions for the students to research the species they chose, answering the questions on the Wildlife Species Habitat Survey using their field guides and Outdoor Alabama's Watchable Wildlife website and *Discovering Alabama's Ask the Expert* website.
- 4) Provide another 30-45 minute session for the students to explore the schoolyard or outdoor classroom area to note if any habitat already exists or could easily be added to provide habitat for the species they chose.

Procedure for Art Activity

- 1) Decide if you wish the students to compete against one another in a contest. If you do wish to hold a contest, determine if the contest will be held among students in your classroom, for your whole grade level, or between all of the students in the school.
- 2) Review the Suggested Art Contest Guidelines on page 3 to help you create the guidelines for your school's art contest.
- 3) Once you have finalized your art contest guidelines, then print copies of the guidelines and distribute them to all of the participating students.
- 4) Provide 45-60 minute sessions for students to work on their artwork. Remind the students that they should depict the wildlife in native habitat that could be found in Alabama.

Judging Procedure

Follow the Suggested Art Contest Guidelines on page 3.

The artwork should portray anatomically-correct, native wildlife in their native habitat, while also demonstrating the artists' creativity, originality, and skills to create a realistic composition. The Wildlife Species Habitat Survey should also include an accurate description of the animal and its habitat requirements.

Consider inviting representatives from local art museums, local conservation organizations, the local Alabama Cooperative Extension System office, and the local Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources office to be your judges. Consider contacting local businesses for prizes for the winners.

Assessment

Students should use grade-level appropriate vocabulary in their answers on the Wildlife Species Habitat Survey. The description of the animal should match how the animal is depicted in the artwork, and the appropriate habitat should be incorporated in the art as well.

Extensions

- ▶ Submit your top students' artwork to a regional or national wildlife art contest such as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Junior Duck Stamp Competition or Endangered Species Youth Art Contest, or the National Rifle Association's Youth Wildlife Art Contest.
- ▶ Students draw an area of their schoolyard or outdoor classroom on graph paper, adding the habitat components needed for the wildlife species that they researched and creating a project plan with materials and plants needed to create the habitat along with estimated costs. See AWF's website for examples.



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Suggested Art Contest Guidelines (Page 3 of 4)

Art Contest Guidelines

Number of Entries: Each student may only enter one piece of artwork.

Grade Categories: Establish grade categories such as K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

Divisions: Allow students to compete in different “divisions” such as insects, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, or birds.

Number of Winners: Advertise the number of winners per grade category and/or division such as 1st Place, 2nd Place, 3rd Place and Honorable Mention.

Artwork Identification: The artist’s mark, name, and/or signature must not appear on the front of the artwork.

Wildlife Species Survey: Each piece of artwork must have the Wildlife Species Habitat Survey form attached to the back.

Deadline: Advertise the contest deadline, and allow four weeks for students to complete their projects.

Certificates of Participation: Download an Alabama Youth Wildlife Art Contest Certificate of Participation from the Alabama Wildlife Federation’s website at <http://www.alabamawildlife.org/youth-wildlife-art-contest/> for each student.

Judging: Invite local artists and representatives from local conservation organizations and agencies to judge.

Prizes: Provide prizes for the top winners in each category, division, or classroom, depending on how you organize the contest. Possible prizes could include homework passes, gift certificates from local arts and crafts stores, and/or winning artwork displays in school library or at a local business.

Fundraising: To help raise funds for your school’s art program and/or your school’s outdoor classroom, utilize an online fundraising program like OriginalWorks.com or KidsKreations.us to turn your students’ artwork into custom products.

Artwork Technical Requirements

Media: Any flat media can be used including pencil, ink, acrylic, oil, charcoal, pastel, crayon, watercolor, and/or collage.

Size: All entries should be between 8” x 10” and 9” x 12”.

Wrapping: Entries must NOT be framed, mounted or matted. If charcoal or chalk is used, entries must be protected with shrink-wrap or wrapped in acetate.

Entry Criteria: The artwork should be judged based on the following criteria:

- ◆ Wildlife Species Native to Alabama
- ◆ Anatomical Accuracy
- ◆ Realistic Composition
- ◆ Creativity & Originality
- ◆ Accurate Species Description on Wildlife Species Survey

The Alabama Outdoor Classroom Program is a partnership between:



Alabama Cooperative
Extension System



Alabama Wildlife Federation

www.alabamawildlife.org/classrooms/



Alabama Department of
Conservation & Natural Resources



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Wildlife Species Habitat Survey (Page 4 of 4)

Student Name _____ Date _____

Teacher's Name _____ Grade _____

The Alabama Wildlife Federation encourages students to learn about the wildlife species depicted in their artwork and research the habitat where the species is found in Alabama. Use field guides for Alabama or the Southeast and <http://www.outdooralabama.com/watchable-wildlife> to research the following:

1. Name of Wildlife Species (*must be native to Alabama*): _____
2. What of animal is it? bird mammal reptile amphibian insect fish
3. Describe this animal's physical characteristics: _____

4. Is this wildlife species' population endangered or threatened? yes no
5. Where in Alabama can you find this wildlife species? _____

6. What type of habitat does this wildlife species utilize as its home? _____

7. What does this wildlife species eat? _____

8. What is the source of water for this species? _____

9. Where does this wildlife species raise its young? _____

10. Can you find this species in your outdoor classroom? yes no

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