



Conservation Made Simple

ACTIVITY

Biodiversity In Your Backyard

How many different kinds of animals live in your backyard?

Although children might spend a considerable amount of time in their backyards they may not always notice the diversity of wildlife that lives there! This activity is a great way to help children become more aware of their surroundings by developing keen observation skills. Children love to discover the world around them. Telling them about all of the great creatures that are so close to their home will spark their curiosity and inspire them to flip over logs to discover the wonders that lie beneath. This will hopefully make them want to conserve these new-found animals and help them form a connection with nature. These are lessons that will last a lifetime.

Things you need:

- ★ 18 Assorted plastic animals found in backyards (e.g. spiders, butterflies, squirrels)
- ★ Identification Cards (two different types with 9 animals per card)
- ★ Crayons - if using a coated centra or erasable sublimation card, black contractor lumber crayons work best. The writing stays on the card and not the child.
- ★ Towel - when selecting a towel to purchase for cleaning of the card, try and select one that has texture to it. It will make it easier to wipe the crayon off.

What to do:

- Before the event starts, set up the plastic animals in a setting that might resemble a backyard. Place the animals in locations where they might actually be found in nature.
- Tell the children that we need their help finding animals in our backyard. Ask the children to name some animals they see around their homes. Do they do anything special to help those animals out? You may briefly discuss things like bird feeders, bird baths and how they positively impact wildlife.
- Hand them an identification card and writing tool. Tell the children to find as many animals as they can. When they find an animal, they can cross it off of the card. Also, tell the children that when they are finished, return the writing tool and identification card to you.
- As the children are exploring the backyard tell them to look high and low because animals live everywhere! Offer the children assistance by giving clues about where an animal might live, what color it may be or what food they eat.

- When finished, talk with the children about the activity. For example, what was their favorite animal find? Do they find any of these animals in their backyard? Do they have anything in their yard to help animals (bird feeder, bat box, bird bath, compost bin)? Close the conversation with a take away message. For example, “All animals are important, even the creepy crawly ones, so try not to squish bugs!”, “Care for wildlife at home by providing them with a backyard habitat by planting flowers or trees as food, hanging a bat box or even filling a bird bath!”, “You can recycle like a bug by starting a compost pile!”, “Instead of throwing your plastic bottles away you can recycle them and make them into a bird feeder!”
- Once finished with the conversation, wipe card clean with a towel.
- Children always like to be rewarded after finishing an activity, so this is a great opportunity for a give away that has a conservation message. Your institution can try stamps, temporary tattoos, stickers or bookmarks as inexpensive rewards.
- After they have found all of the animals on their card be sure to mention that zoos like this one are great places to see animals, but their own backyard is full of fascinating wildlife too. Challenge them to find nine different animals in their own backyard once they get home.

Creating your own identification cards:

The artwork for the identification cards is included in the toolkit. To create your own identification cards you can use a variety of fabrication choices from inexpensive to costly. Choose an option from the list below that best suits your institution!

Paper - One time use

This inexpensive option works well as children can take away the identification card when they are finished and re-use it to play the activity in their own backyard! We recommend that if your institution chooses this option that you select a recycled, heavy weight paper (card stock). Also, you won't have to worry about purchasing towels to clean crayon off of the identification card!

Laminate - Reusable

This option works well because the identification cards can be re-used and are easy to replace. Have the identification card printed on a recycled, heavy weight paper (card stock) and laminate. With this option, a standard crayon can be used to mark the identification card and easily wiped off with a towel

Coated Centra - Reusable

This is a printing process that you can contact your local printers to find out more. This product has a clear, cleanable surface (similar to a laminate) that contains the artwork. It is then adhered to a plastic centra backing. Over time, this surface can peel off of the centra. This option would not be ideal for a long-term program, but is great for the short term.

Erasable Sublimation boards

This option is the most expensive, but it is also a long-term option because the cards are durable and can be re-used hundreds of times over. This identification card is a durable Lexan plastic. The artwork is imbedded in the plastic through a process known as sublimation. Images can be printed in black and white or color. Another advantage to this option is that the plastic can easily be written on with a black lumber crayon and wiped off with a towel.

