



## Virtual Outdoor Adventure Programs

### *Mammals: Predators and Prey (Grades K-5)*



#### **Objectives:**

- To teach kids about the ways animals are grouped, in this case mammals can be grouped into predator and prey categories.
- To teach kids the differences between mammalian predators and prey by reviewing adaptations (behaviors and physical characteristics) that influence survival.
- To teach kids the best tips for wildlife observation at National Wildlife Refuges.

**Running Time:** ~6:30 minutes

#### **Materials:**

- Paper
- Pencils/other writing utensils
- Crayons
- Markers

#### **Video Outline:**

1. Introduction of how animals are grouped in various ways
2. Definition of mammals and distinguishing characteristics
3. Definitions of predators and prey
4. The different ways plants and animals get their food
5. Hunting behaviors and characteristics of predators (accompanying activity, Hunt Like a Predator)
6. Prey behaviors and characteristics
7. Tracks (accompanying activity, Compare the Tracks)
8. Wildlife observation tips
9. Final statement: Now you're ready to observe wildlife!

#### **Script and Activity Outline:**

*\*Tip for Teachers: This video has some cues for pausing and playing, but feel free to pause at any point to give enough time to go through each activity.*

There are many ways to group animals. There are animals that live on land, some that live in water, and some that inhabit both! One of these groups is called mammals. (**Vocab:** Mammal: A warm-blooded animal with vertebrae and the distinguishing characteristics of hair or fur (show pelts), females that produce milk for their young and females generally giving birth to live young. Fun fact: Only 2 species of old-world mammals lay eggs! The duck-billed platypus and echidna.) Human beings are also part of the mammal group!

Within the mammal group there are predators and prey, and some may even fall into both groups.

**Vocab:** Predator (An animal that hunts and eats other animals.)

**Vocab:** Prey (Animals that are hunted and eaten by other animals.)

Animals hunt or forage for their food, while plants get their food through the process of photosynthesis. All the food each creature consumes becomes the energy that is needed for that creature to survive in the wild. In addition to food, predators and prey need fresh air, clean water and plenty of space to build their shelter.

The main difference between predators and prey is in what they eat and how they get their food. Each predator has different **1. hunting behaviors & 2. physical characteristics** that make them successful hunters. **Hunting behaviors:** Hunters find their food either alone or in groups. For example, kit foxes will search for their food alone, while wolves will hunt in packs to increase their chances of hunting prey that also hang out in groups, such as deer. Fun Fact: Deer groups are called herds. **Physical characteristics:** Predators have sharp senses to help them hunt successfully. For example, big cats like lynx and mountain lions use stealth and speed to catch their prey and excellent eyesight to spot their prey, even when its dark out. Other predators like coyotes have amazing ears so they can hear even the quickest movements of their rodent prey moving beneath them. Bears have a very advanced sense of smell which helps them hunt animals and even find dead prey or carrion that has been left behind by other predators. Finally, all mammalian predators have sharp teeth and claws to help them eat and grab on to their prey.

**Activity Time:** Hunt Like a Predator (Imagine that you are a predator. What hunting behaviors would you apply? What physical characteristics would you have to help you find prey? Make a list of all your predator qualities or draw a picture of what you'd look like! Share with your peers!

*\*Tip for teachers: Depending on grade level and number of students, kids can make individual lists, small group lists or a big list as a whole class.*

Each prey species also has a specific set of characteristics and behaviors to avoid being eaten by predators such as sharp eyesight, good hearing, a strong sense of smell and ways to warn members in their group when danger is present. For example, prairie dogs adapt to survive by living in groups, hiding in their underground burrows,

and using warning calls or barks to alert other members of their group when a predator is nearby. White-tailed deer have great ears and will warn members of their group when they sense danger by flagging or exposing the white fur of their tail and backside.

Sometimes mammals can be difficult to spot in the wild, but you can find signs such as scat (poop) or tracks to show you where they have been.

**Activity Time:** Compare the Tracks (Look at your hands. Look at the tracks of these predators and prey. How are they different from each other? How are they similar? How do your hands compare to these tracks? Write down all the ways, and share with your peers.

*\*Tip for teachers: Depending on grade level and number of students, kids can make individual lists, small group lists or a big list as a whole class.*

The next time you visit a National Wildlife Refuge, keep these tips in mind for observing mammals and other wildlife.

1. Start your observation early in the day. Most wildlife is active earlier in the day.
2. Bring ID guides and a pair of binoculars to get close-up views. Some visitor centers have binoculars and guides you can borrow!
3. Be very still, quiet, and patient when observing wildlife. It might take some time before you spot anything, and when you do, keep a safe distance.
4. Look for animal signs such as biofacts like scat or tracks to see where wildlife has been.

Now you're ready to observe wildlife!

Credits

Thank you for watching!

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## Additional Activities

- **Conservation Connect**
  - Quick Freeze Prairie Dogs (Students play an active version of freeze tag to learn about the predator and prey relationships between coyotes and prairie dogs.) Grades: 4-6
- **Growing up Wild, PreK-K**
  - Lunch for a Bear (Children identify the kinds of foods that Black Bear's eat by creating a plate of "bear food.")
  - Show Me the Energy (Children discover that all animals, including people, depend on plants as a food source, either directly or indirectly.)
  - Tracks! (Children explore animal tracks and make and compare tracks of their own.)
- **Project Wild**
  - Tracks! (Search for and identify wildlife tracks, then make plaster casts of tracks.) Grades: 3-8