WHAT'S WILD?

Objectives

Students will be able to: 1) distinguish between wildlife and domesticated animals; and 2) recognize that wildlife occurs in a variety of forms.

Method

Students find and classify pictures of wild and domesticated animals, and construct collages.

Background

An animal is generally referred to as any living organism other than a plant. Wildlife is any animal that lives in a basically free condition, providing for its own food, shelter, and other needs in an environment that serves as a suitable habitat. Wildlife refers to animals that are not tamed or domesticated. Wildlife may be small organisms only visible to humans if seen through a microscope, or as large as a whale. Wildlife includes, but is not limited to, insects, spiders, birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians, and mammals, if non-domesticated. Domesticated animals are those which humans have tamed, kept in captivity, and bred for special purposes. The process of domestication takes place over a long period of time and has involved genetic manipulation through selective breeding. All domesticated animals have their origins in wild ancestors. Cattle used for food and other products; sheep for wool and other products, as well as dogs, cats, birds, and fish commonly kept as pets are all examples of domesticated animals.

Confusion can arise about animals that sometimes may be wild, sometimes may be tamed, and sometimes may be domesticated. If the animal, or population of animals, can live on its own, survive, and even reproduce, it is probably wild. Individual animals may be tamed—like some animals in zoos—while most of their numbers remain wild. A wild animal may appear to be tame, but still should be considered wild unless it is both tamed and domesticated. Some animals that are usually considered domesticated—like dogs, cats, horses, and goats—may become wild. When they do, the term "feral" is used. For example, there are feral goats on Catalina Isle, and feral horses and burros in some areas of western states in the U.S.

Where it is difficult to distinguish whether an animal is wild or domesticated, encourage the students to think in terms of what is **usually** the case. Remember that wild animals basically take care of themselves, as long as they have a suitable environment or habitat in which to live. Domesticated or tamed animals basically depend on people to feed and take care of them, and are typically used by people; for example, as a source of products and as pets. Whereas domesticated animals like cats and dogs are normally considered suitable pets, wild animals—even if tamed—are nearly always unsuitable, inappropriate, and frequently illegal pets.

The major purpose of this activity is for students to be able to distinguish between wild and domesticated animals.

Materials

magazine or newspaper pictures of a wide variety of animals, poster board or heavy construction paper, glue

Age: Grades K-3
Subjects: Science, Language Arts, Art
Skills: classification, media construction, observation
Duration: 60 minutes
Group Size: any
Setting: indoors
Conceptual Framework Reference: I., I.B.3., I.B.4., V.A.1
Key Vocabulary: animal, wild, domesticated

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Procedure

1. Ask students to bring pictures to class of as many animals as they can find in magazines or newspapers at home (or get them from magazines and newspapers available in school, if any). Ask the students to look for pictures of as many different animals as they can, telling them that animals are any living things except plants.
2. Once the students have assembled a collection of animal pictures, it is time to classify them. Students may work alone or in small groups. Talk with the students about wild animals and domesticated animals (like pets, farm animals, etc.) before they get started with their classifying.
3. Once the students have put their animals into two categories—either wild or domesticated—get out the poster board or construction paper and glue and ask the students to make two collages. . .one of wildlife, and one of domesticated animals. You can make a classroom gallery out of the products.

Extensions

1. Make a master list of the wildlife and domesticated animals. Use the words for spelling, and talk about the variety of animals found.
2. Younger students can take cut-outs of animals and put them where they fit—like birds in the sky, whales in the ocean, a deer in the forest.
3. Make mobiles that show "layers" of animals—in the sea, on land, and in the air. Build one huge mobile with an animal for each student that shows deserts, forests, mountains, seas, and the skies. Different colors of brightly-colored yarn can be used to hang the different animals in the mobile according to the ecosystem in which they live.

Evaluation

Which animals have been domesticated: goldfish, horses, cows, ducks, boa constrictors, mosquitoes, bats, chickens, lions, eagles?