

## **Instructor Introduction**

### Learning About Wildlife (Grades K-2)

Students will learn the difference between wild and domestic animals and why wild animals should not be kept as pets.

#### **Excerpts from the MSPCA's Statements of Belief:**

“The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals believes that, for fundamental humane reasons, which consider both the quality of life of individual animals, and wildlife as species, wild animals should be permitted to exist undisturbed in their native environments. Furthermore, captive wildlife, by virtue of its confinement, generally suffers varying degrees of physiological and/or psychological deprivation, which can impact upon the animals’ general well-being.”

“The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals believes that all animals exist in a dynamic state of interdependence with their environment, and that no animal is inherently a “nuisance” or “pest” animal.”

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The following bullets list the important elements behind this lesson plan. For more information on any wildlife questions, please visit [www.livingwithwildlife.org](http://www.livingwithwildlife.org), a companion program to the MSPCA, or contact an MSPCA Education Coordinator.

- companion animals (domestic animals, pets) are dependent on humans to provide for their care and their basic needs: food, water, shelter, exercise; wild animals are capable of providing these needs themselves
- though we should not attempt to provide for a wild animal’s needs, it is important that we help protect and preserve wildlife habitats to ensure their survival
- companion animals cannot survive in the wild; they are not capable of finding food or shelter, and don’t have the ability to protect themselves from serious dangers
- animals that are domesticated have been selectively bred for specific “tame” traits over many generations; they are not wild animals that are “made” domestic by living with humans
- wild animals should not be kept as pets for many reasons:
  - it is illegal to keep wild animals as pets
  - it is often very stressful for them to live in confinement
  - most wild animals are afraid of people; it is not in their nature to get “used” to them
  - many wild animals will be destructive in a house by chewing or shredding
  - many wild animals will bite or scratch if they feel threatened
  - wild animals can carry diseases that are very dangerous to humans and other animals, including rabies
  - capturing a wild animal can impact the welfare of other animals (mate, offspring) that depend of that animal for food and protection
  - not all wildlife are greatly understood, therefore we don’t always know how to best meet their needs, including diet, social interactions, and appropriate housing

- baby animals and birds' eggs and nests should not be disturbed by adults or kids; if an adult suspects that an animal is injured or orphaned, they should consult [www.livingwithwildlife.org](http://www.livingwithwildlife.org) for information on what to do

## Humane Education Lesson Plans

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**Lesson Title:** Learning About Wildlife (Grades K-2)

### MA Curriculum Strands:

#### *Science Frameworks*

Biology K-2 (Characteristics of Living Things, Living Things and Their Environment)

1. Recognize that animals (including humans) and plants are living things that grow, reproduce, and need food, air, and water.

6. Recognize that people and other animals interact with the environment through their senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.

8. Identify the ways in which an organism's habitat provides for its basic needs (plants require air, water, nutrients, and light; animals require food, water, air, and shelter).

#### *Social Studies Frameworks*

PreK-K,4. Describe the location and features of places in the immediate neighborhood of the student's home or school.

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### Lesson Summary:

Students will learn the difference between wild and domestic animals and why wild animals should not be kept as pets.

**Preparation:** time to make copies, print photos

**Lesson Time:** 1-3 lessons, each lasting 45-60 minutes

### Materials:

- white board/ markers
- images of a variety of domestic animals (dog, cat, house rabbit, parakeet) or plush animals
- images of a variety of wild animals, some local (giraffe, elephant, tiger, chimpanzee, fox, squirrel, skunk, field mouse, robin, wild rabbit) or plush animals
- images of different habitats (nest in a tree branch, pond, savannah, jungle, woods, house)
- coordinating handouts for students (optional/ to choose from)
- the book The Salamander Room by Ann Mazer (optional)

### Discussion Outline:

#### Comparing Pets and Wildlife

##### **Ask**

- What kinds of animals are pets? (cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, birds, fish, gerbils, horses, or barn animals)

Show images or representations (plush toys) of these animals as they are named, or to prompt answers.

- What are some animals that are not pets? (“exotic” animals like lions, tigers, giraffes, chimpanzees, local animals like skunks, bats, and raccoons). Ask them to also think of animals that might live in this area (skunks, bats, raccoons, etc.)

It might be helpful to show pictures of some animals (photos or sketches) that are lesser known, particularly local wildlife like woodchuck, fisher cat, and opossum.

- Where do these wild animals live? (tiger in the jungle, polar bear in the Arctic, dolphins in the ocean, eagles in a nest)

### **Demonstrate**

Show students images of animals (or plush toys) and have them determine whether they are pets or wild animals.

### Pets are Domestic

#### **Ask**

- Are there any animals that are sometimes pets and sometimes NOT pets?
- What animals are these? (rabbits, fish, and birds are the most common)

**Explain** Some rabbits are pets- these are called domestic animals (“domestic” means “house”). Rabbits that are kept as pets were raised by humans over many generations and they are tame (not wild). Wild rabbits are animals that do not spend any time with people and are afraid of them. Wild rabbits find their own food and make their own shelter. Domestic rabbits need people to provide all of their food and shelter, because they don’t know how to get these things on their own.

#### **Ask**

- Would a pet rabbit be okay living outside on its own? (“No”)
- Why not? (“It wouldn’t know where to live or get food”)
- Do you think a wild rabbit would like to live in a house? (“No” or “Maybe”)
- Why not? (“Wild rabbits are used to having space and it would be hard for them to live in a cage, plus they are probably afraid of people”)

### Love Your Own, Leave Others Alone

#### **Ask**

- Is it okay for a wild animal to live as a pet? (a BIG “No!”)
  - it’s not fair to the animal, because it might have a family that depends on it to get food and provide protection
  - we don’t always know everything a wild animal needs, so it is hard for humans to provide the best kind of food and home for wild animals
  - wild animals are used to freedom that they don’t have in a house, and it can be very stressful for them to have to live in a small area; stressed animals can easily get sick and die
  - most wild animals are afraid of people and will NEVER get comfortable with them; it’s not in their nature
  - many wild animals will be destructive in a house by chewing or shredding
  - many wild animals will bite or scratch if they feel threatened
  - wild animals can carry diseases that are very dangerous to humans, and humans can transmit germs to wild animals that can make them sick

- Is it okay to put a wild animal in a jar or a cage for just a little while to watch it? (another big “No”)
  - wild animals can become very confused if you take them away from where you find them; they might not be able to find their home again even if you only take them away for a little while
  - migratory animals (those that travel) may have trouble catching up with others of their kind
  - remember that wild animals are usually afraid of people, so it is very scary for them to be handled by people or near them, even for a little while
  
- Should we touch or move birds’ eggs or nests? Should we touch or move wild baby animals?
  - we should leave eggs and nests alone so that mom and dad animals can take care of them
  - most baby animals that look lost have parents who are out finding food and will come back to feed them, but they might be afraid if people are too close!
  - if you move a baby animal or bring it in your house, it’s parents won’t know where to find it to take care of it and feed it
  
- What are some ways we can learn about wild animals without disturbing them?
  - we can watch videos about wild animals
  - we can read books or magazines about them
  - we can watch them from afar (without touching or disturbing them- like bird watching)

### **Humane Learning Outcome**

“Remember that wild animals do what they need to survive. They need food, water, and shelter just like humans and domestic animals do. It is important to respect wildlife and make sure they have a chance to make a life for themselves in their natural habitat.”

### **Activities:**

Handouts: “Habitat Match” (MSPCA/ AHES)  
 “Caterpillar-and-Jar” Coloring Page (MSPCA)  
 “Pick Out the Pet” (Pet Pals, K-2)  
 “Hive, Sweet Hive” (Kind Teacher, Volume 27)  
 “Cat-egories” (Kind Teacher, Volume 29)  
 “Thumbs Up for Little Critters” (Kind Teacher, Volume 26)  
 “Sharing Our World” (Kind Teacher, Volume 28)  
 “Spider Saver” (Kind Teacher, Volume 28)

Story: [The Salamander Room](#) by Ann Mazer