

Wildlife is Everywhere!

Study Units

[Iowa's Wildlife Resource Base](#)

Supplemental Information

Wildlife can be found in every part of our state. Iowa still has some high quality, diverse habitats—forests, prairies, and wetlands—each supporting a wide variety of wildlife. You must visit natural areas to see certain species of wildlife, but many others are right where we live—in window sills or the backyard, on a city building, or at the edge of a crop field.

People and wildlife share environments. Many of Iowa's animals have adapted well to human activities such as farming and urban development. Some species have benefited by living near humans (e.g., white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, coyote, and raccoon, all do well in urban and agricultural settings). Peregrine falcons thrive on tall buildings in cities, eating pigeons, starlings, and house sparrows.

Animals can be wild, domestic, tame, or feral. Wildlife managers consider wildlife to be free roaming, naturally occurring species that live within nature's system without significant influence by people. **Domestic animals** (e.g., dogs, hamsters, and cows) are not wildlife. They have been bred by humans for a specific purpose and depend on humans for food, water, shelter, and survival. Some wild animals can be **tame** (conditioned to accept and tolerate human presence). Some normally wild animals (e.g., elk, bison, or white-tailed deer) are raised as domestic animals for food or aesthetics. Some domestic animals become **feral** (escape confinement and can survive without human help). Feral animals are not a natural part of ecosystems. They compete with native animals for food and shelter and can transmit disease to wildlife. Domestic, tame, and feral animals are not wildlife.

Teaching Suggestions

It is a good idea to help younger students define a “wild” animal. List characteristics on the board to help them differentiate between wild and domestic animals. (The class hamster should not be on their list of wild animals in the classroom.)

Wildlife is everywhere. It is important for students to understand that, while they may not always see an animal, there are signs that tell them an animal has been there. Look for things like chewed materials, bits of seeds or other food, spider webs, cocoons, and feces (a sure sign something has been there!)

Review the [*Guide to Animal Signs*](#) before a class search for animal signs. Use the [*'Who's Clues?'*](#) sheet to record what you find. Animals may not leave very obvious signs (sometimes they leave only scent). Make sure students use senses besides sight! Remind them to listen for wildlife, sniff the air, or feel with their fingers. Some common wildlife students may find are: cottontail rabbits, fox squirrels, snakes, earth worms, spiders, ground squirrels, songbirds, opossums, raccoons, and assorted insects.



Evaluation

See the activity.

Student Materials

- Guide to Animal Signs
- Who's Clues?

Teacher Aids

None

Additional Materials

- [Online resource for wildlife tracks and sign](#)
- [Who Goes There? Unraveling a Mystery](#) - Wildlife tracks are a mystery you can solve. Learn how to read tracks with the help of tracking guides and photos. Page includes activity links and book suggestions.
- Field guides to animal tracks and scat.
- Posters or pictures of common wildlife, make sure to include invertebrates.



Guide to Animal Signs



Who's Clues?

Write down or draw a picture of the wildlife you found in your classroom. What clues did they leave?

Animal found inside	Clues I found

Write down or draw a picture of the wildlife you found outside your school. What clues did they leave?

Animal found outside	Clues I found

List the clues you found with the sense you used to find them!

We saw:	
We heard:	
We felt:	
We could smell:	

Which animals used things made by people as part of their home or habitat?

