

Sharing Space with Wildlife



Life Skill: Critical thinking

Project Skill: Identifying and managing human/wildlife conflicts

Objective: Identify nuisance wildlife situations and make recommendations for minimizing damage

Success Indicator: Participants assess human/wildlife conflicts and propose workable solutions for resolution

Provisions Needed

(Some or all of the following)

- News sources or online news archives
- Camera
- Internet access
- Graph paper, construction paper, or other materials
- Computer and printer
- Slide or overhead projector



Trailhead

Almost everyone enjoys seeing wild animals. Millions of dollars are spent providing or improving habitat (food, water, shelter) for both game (hunnable) and nongame species. **However, sometimes wildlife populations increase so much that they encroach on human activities.** Many wild animals

grow accustomed to being near humans and thrive in "our" territory. The result may be destruction of human property—on farms, in homes, or in businesses. The damage may have severe economic impacts, or it may be simply an inconvenience for humans.

woodpeckers drill holes in the sides of people's homes



Trailblazing

When wild animals become a nuisance or a problem, it is not that they have become "bad." Their populations may have become unbalanced, or they may have adapted so well to human territory that they and we compete for living space. Under certain situations, just about any animal can cause damage. You may be familiar with such problems as squirrels chewing on or raiding bird feeders, woodpeckers drilling holes in the sides of people's homes, or deer browsing on landscape plants.

any animal can cause damage

Make a list of wildlife damage and conflicts that you know about and can study or evaluate. If possible, include situations that exist in your community or state. If there is a compelling problem involving one particular species, you may focus your investigation on a single issue. Otherwise, you might draw up a list of several existing or potential problems and propose ways to reduce or manage conflict.



squirrels raid bird feeders



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You might share some of your ideas with local wildlife specialists or enforcement officers and get their feedback on your observations.

Wildlife management can be a controversial issue, especially when solutions are lethal to animals. You'll also find that not all wildlife problems are disagreeable to all people. This reality causes conflict among humans, as well as between humans and animals. There may be many solutions to a problem. For

each human/animal conflict that you document, explore as many solutions as possible. Investigate the pros and cons of each. Make notes and decide which solutions you believe would work best.

Make a display or chart, or develop a presentation explaining your findings and opinions. Visit some sites where damage is happening, and take photographs of the damage and control measures.

If possible, try out management techniques in problem areas in your community or state.

deer browsing on landscape plants



a management technique:
exclusion

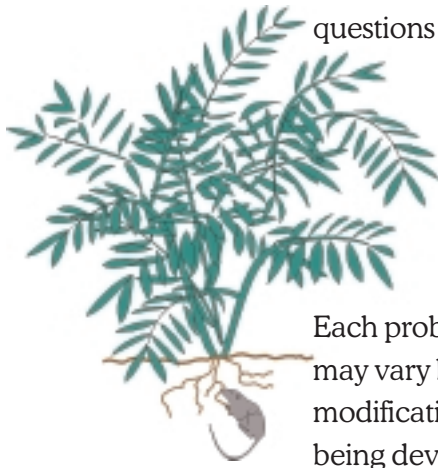


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Field Guide

When first investigating damage by an animal or animals, ask yourself questions like these:



voles
eat
roots



- What species is causing the damage?
- Why are the animals causing the damage?
- What is being damaged, and how much is it worth?
- Do the costs of control outweigh the value of the lost or damaged property?

Each problem might have multiple solutions. Recommended **management** may vary by species and location. A few techniques include exclusion, habitat modification, sanitation, and population management. New control measures are being developed all the time. Also, many “home” remedies are available to reduce wildlife damage. Look for new research and findings as you study your chosen issue.



The Extra Mile

If you have the opportunity to do this project with a group, organize a debate surrounding a single issue. Each participant might be given a different role to play that would involve a specific perspective (for example, farmer, wildlife manager, hunter, business owner, homeowner, animal activist, etc.). Let each participant argue for a different management strategy.



Field Notes

share

- What sources did you use to research your issue?
- What information did you give the most weight to in the investigation of your issue? Why?
- What were the causes of the various problems you investigated?
- Which solutions were the most economical? Which were the most humane?

process

- How did you determine whether techniques were legal?
- How could you tell whether a problem was caused by individual animals or large populations of that animal?
- How did you ensure that you covered all points of view?

generalize

- Why is it important to analyze an issue before drawing a conclusion or making a decision?

apply

- How would you create public support for one of the strategies you recommended?