

Wildlife Prairie State Park
Predators – They’re Part of the Picture
Post – Trip Activity

Short Takes

Objectives:

- Name several threatened and endangered species.
- Describe several reasons these animals and plants are in trouble.

Materials:

- Copies of short articles
- Copies of case history questions
- Chalkboard or easel paper

Procedure:

- Read six short articles to learn about some of the reasons that species become endangered.

Background:

There’s rarely just one problem that causes an animal or plant to become endangered. Instead, a combination of factors, such as habitat loss, pollution, and so on, usually comes into play. By reading six endangered species “case histories”, your students can learn more about the variety of problems that are causing plants and animals to become endangered.

Before starting the activity, copy the “Case History Questions” provided (the answers are included separately). Make enough questions for the group, and then begin the activity by talking about what an endangered species is. Ask students if they can think of some of the reasons plants and animals become endangered, and list their answers on a chalkboard or piece of easel paper.

Next, pass out copies of the short articles to each student. Explain to students that they should take notes as they read the articles to make note of the problems each species is facing. They’ll be using these notes to later answer the questions.

Once the students have finished reading and taking notes, pass out copies of the “Case History Questions”. Tell the students to put their articles away, and then have them use their notes to answer the questions. Go over the answers when everyone is finished.

Now ask the students to again name some of the reasons that species become endangered. Write their reasons down on a chalkboard or piece of easel paper and have the students

Also meets State Goals:

Language/ arts #1

Social Studies #5

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Post – trip Activity
A Logic Game

Objectives:

- Define digitigrade and plantigrade.
- Describe the difference between retractile and non-retractile claws.
- Describe some characteristics of several carnivores.

Materials:

- Copies of page 2 of this activity.
- Chalkboard or easel paper
- Pencils
- Carnivore characteristics worksheets.

State Goals:

- Math #6

Background:

Here’s a fun way to get your group thinking logically while teaching them some characteristics of several carnivores. Start by explaining that mammologists (scientists that study mammals) divide mammals into different groups. One of these groups is *carnivores*. Ask the students to name some of the mammals that belong to this group (cougars, bears, wolves, raccoons, otters, bobcats, etc.). Then ask them what kinds of characteristics the carnivores have that set them apart from other kinds of mammals. Use the sheet *Carnivore Characteristics* to talk about the characteristics of carnivores. Next, explain that some carnivores, such as bears, walk on flat feet just as people do. These carnivores are called *plantigrade*. Other carnivores, such as cats, dogs, and wolves, walk on their toes and are called *digitigrade*.

1. Tell the class that they are going to get a chance to solve a carnivore mystery.
2. Pass out copies of page 2 and tell the students to read the scenario at the top of the page. Make sure they understand that they must figure out the identity of each of the seven mammals and that all the information they need is on the sheet. If they are having trouble getting started, copy the chart on page 3 onto a chalkboard or large sheet of easel paper (DON’T COPY THE ANIMAL NAMES OR YES OR NO ANSWERS!!!).
3. Using the information given in the clue for ANIMAL #1, fill in the first column of the chart. Tell the students to copy the chart and fill in as much of the rest as they can using the information for ANIMAL #2 – ANIMAL #7. Then have them list the information that “John remembers” in columns under their charts. (see diagram below chart). By comparing the information in their charts with that in the columns, the students should be able to figure out which animal is which.
4. Then they can fill in all the “missing” information in their charts. Afterward, go over the class answers using the answers shown in the chart.

**To make the puzzle a little easier for younger students, copy the completed chart shown onto a chalkboard or easel paper. Have them copy it and then use only the information that “John remembers” to figure out which carnivore is which.

Scenerio

John Kempke was at the library doing some research for a school project on mammals. He had chosen to concentrate on the following carnivores: badgers, cougars, black bears, timber wolves, river otters, gray foxes, and bobcats. By reading through all kinds of books, he found lots of information about each animal. Unfortunately, John didn't keep very good notes. When he got home he realized he had only the following hodgepodge of information:

Animal #1:

- No longer found in Illinois
- Walks on flat feet
- Is not a strict meat eater

Animal #2:

- Is still found in Illinois
- Walks on its toes
- Has retractile claws

Animal #3:

- Is no longer found in Illinois
- Eats strictly meat
- Has retractile claws

Animal #4:

- Spends a lot of time away from land
- Walks on its toes
- Still found in Illinois

Animal #5:

- Is still found in Illinois
- Walks on its toes
- Is not a strict meat eater

Animal #6:

- Is still found in Illinois
- Has non-retractile claws
- Spends most of its time on land

Animal #7:

- Is no longer found in Illinois
- Walks on its toes
- Is a strict meat eater

After reading over his sketchy information, John is convinced that he can figure out which animal is which. He remembers that black bears eat plants as well as meat, as do gray foxes, but all the other carnivores are pretty strict meat eaters; the bobcat and cougar are the only animals on his list that have retractile claws; black bears, cougars, and timber wolves are no longer found in Illinois; only river otters spend most of their lives away from land; and only one of the animals is a plantigrade – black bear.

Can you help John figure out which animal is which?

*Hint: making a table with columns for each animal and its characteristics may be very useful in solving the mystery (yes or no columns: is it still found in Illinois?, retractile claws?, digitigrade?, strict meat eater?, spends most of its time on land?).

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A Logic Game—Answer Key

	Animal #1 Black Bear	Animal #2 Bobcat	Animal #3 Cougar	Animal #4 River Otter	Animal #5 Gray Fox	Animal #6 Badger	Animal #7 Timber Wolf
<i>Does it still live in Illinois?</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Does it have retractile claws?</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
<i>Does it spend most of its time on land?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Is it digitigrade?</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Is it a strict meat eater?</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Not Strict Meat Eaters	Retractile Claws	Still Present in Illinois	Spends most of its time on land	Plantigrade
Black Bear Gray Fox	Bobcat Cougar	Bobcat River Otter Gray Fox Badger	Black Bear Bobcat Cougar Gray Fox Badger Timber Wolf	Black Bear

Strict Meat Eaters	Non-retractile claws	No longer present in Illinois	Spends most of its time not on land	Digitigrade
Bobcat Cougar River Otter Timber Wolf Badger	Black Bear Gray Fox River Otter Badger Timber Wolf	Black Bear Cougar Timber Wolf	River Otter	Bobcat Cougar River Otter Gray Fox Badger Timber Wolf

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 A Logic Game —Example Worksheet

	Animal #1 Black Bear	Animal #2 Bobcat	Animal #3 Cougar	Animal #4 River Otter	Animal #5 Gray Fox	Animal #6 Badger	Animal #7 Timber Wolf
<i>Does it still live in Illinois?</i>							
<i>Does it have retractile claws?</i>							
<i>Does it spend most of its time on land?</i>							
<i>Is it digitigrade?</i>							
<i>Is it a strict meat eater?</i>							

Not Strict Meat Eaters	Retractile Claws	Still Present in Illinois	Spends most of its time on land	Plantigrade

Strict Meat Eaters	Non-retractile claws	No longer present in Illinois	Spends most of its time not on land	Digitigrade

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Suited For Survival

At almost every level of the food chain, animals are trying to catch and eat other animals to stay alive. Every animal has some way to defend itself from its predator. This defense may be hiding, fleeing, fighting, or some special way of defending itself.

Some animals from the grassland community are pictured below. List the natural enemies for each animal and its adaptation for protection.

Animal	Enemies	Protection
		
		

