

## FUN AND GAMES WITH WILDLIFE EXPLORERS

Wildlife Explorers is NRPA's turn-key initiative that connects youth to nature by utilizing local park and recreation spaces to encourage nature discovery.

Below are some nature-themed games and activities that can supplement the Wildlife Explorers curriculum. Wildlife Explorers materials are available for download at <http://www.nrpa.org/wildlifeexplorers/>.

### WILDLIFE HABITAT CREATION

Divide participants into small groups. The goal of the game is for the participants to create various wildlife habitats with just their bodies. Assign each group a habitat. Each team member tries to find his/her place in the environment. For example: If the given habitat is a forest, then some participants will play the role of trees with their bodies, while others will play the wind and animals that live in a forest. At the end of the activity, other groups have to guess what kind of environment the group was creating.

### WHO AM I?

Before the game, prepare notecards with the name (or picture) of an animal found in the park. Suggestions: pigeon, squirrel, ant, butterfly, fox, otter, snake, frog, etc. Put tape on the back of the notecard and tape it to a child's forehead without showing her/him the card. The child with the notecard will ask the group questions to try to determine what animal he/she is. The questions should be yes or no questions, such as, "Do I live in a tree?" "Do I have 4 legs?" "Do I have a beak?" "Am I a hunter?" You may have to help the child think of questions to ask. For younger children, it may be easier to split the kids in to two groups and have one group ask the other group questions to guess their animal.

### LIFE AS A CHIPMUNK

In this game, students will learn about food webs and predator-prey population dynamics. Students will play prey (chipmunk, squirrel, mouse, etc.) or predators (hawks, foxes, coyote, etc.) and attempt to collect enough food to survive and/or reproduce under various scenarios. You will need something to symbolize food (something biodegradable, like dried beans or seeds) and some space to run around in.

#### The Game

Explain that they are chipmunks and need to collect 30 pieces of food in order to survive until the next season. If they do not collect this amount in the time allotted, they will not survive. The game will be played in several timed rounds.



DISCOVER NATURE IN LOCAL PARKS

Table 1. Suggested numbers.

	Survive	Reproduce
Chipmunk	30 acorns	60 acorns
Hawk	5 chipmunks	10 chipmunks
Human	40 acorns	80 acorns

*\*These numbers can be adjusted based on the group size and time available*

At the start of each round, scatter food around the playing area.

**Season 1: BOUNTY** — Throw an excess amount of food so that all students can collect enough to survive. Explain that this was a bountiful season and many acorns grew.

*At the end of the round ask your students:*

**Was it easy or difficult to find food?** Answer: Easy

**Season 2: FAMINE** — Put out slightly less food so some of the students may not be able to collect enough. Explain that there was a hurricane or harsh winter and not enough acorns grew.

*At the end of the round ask your students:*

**How much of the prey population survived?** Answer: (variable — likely some but not all)

**Was it easier or harder to find food compared to the first season?** Answer: Harder

**Season 3: POPULATION REBOUND** — Put out a bounty of food. The game continues with the smaller prey population, but tell students that if they can collect 60 pieces, then they can reproduce. They can choose a friend to bring back into the game. Explain that animals need food and energy not only to survive, but also to produce offspring.

*At the end of the round ask your students:*

**How many prey survived?** Answer: (variable — likely most or all)

**How many prey reproduced?** Answer: (variable — likely some)

**What happened to the chipmunk population?** Answer: Rebounded, returned to original size

**Was it easier or harder to find food compared to last season?** Answer: Easier because the population was smaller.

**Season 4: PREDATOR** — Select one student to be a predator. Explain the relationship between the prey and predator. The predator must catch five prey animals for food. Those caught by the predator will be out. The predator may reproduce (bring in another) if it can catch 10 prey animals. Prey animals must still find their 30 pieces of food and may bring another in if they can get 60. Designate a “safe zone” (a tree, a marking on the ground, etc.) representing an animal den. Prey can hide from predators in the safe zone as long as they want; however, they will have to venture out in order to collect enough food to survive.

*At the end of the round ask your students:*

**How many prey animals survived/reproduced?** Answer: (variable — likely some)

**Did the predator survive/reproduce?** Answer: (variable — likely yes)

**Was it easier or harder for prey to find food compared to last season?** Answer: Harder because they had to avoid a predator, but a bit easier because there was less competition.

**What happened to the prey population?** Answer: Became smaller due to predation.

**Season 5: PREDATOR POPULATION BOOM** — In the final round, students who did not survive the last round now become predators. There will probably not be enough prey for the predators to survive, so you can discuss how both populations depend on the other for survival.

*At the end of the round ask your students:*

**How many prey animals survived/reproduced?** Answer: (variable — likely few or none)

**How many predators survived/reproduced?** Answer: (variable — likely some, but not all)

**Was it easier or harder for prey to find food compared to last season?** Answer: Harder.

**What happened to the predator population?** Answer: Became smaller due to lack of prey.

**What determines the size of the prey population?** Answer: Food and predation.

**Season 6: HUMANS** — The sixth round introduces a human. The human requires 40 pieces of food and can pick up the food or tag a chipmunk or hawk and take their food from them. If the human gets 80 pieces it can bring in another human. Discuss how humans can impact the food web.

*At the end of the round ask your students:*

**How many prey animals survived/reproduced?** Answer: [variable — likely few or none]

**How many predators survived/reproduced?** Answer: [variable — less than last time]

**Was it easier or harder for the prey to find food compared to last season?** Answer: Harder because they had to avoid both predators and humans.

**Was it easier or harder for predators to find food compared to last season?** Answer: Harder because they had to compete with humans for prey and they had to avoid the humans.

**What happened to the predator population?** Answer: Got smaller due to lack of prey.

**What are some ways humans can impact food webs?** Possible answers: habitat destruction, over hunting/fishing, game restocking, introducing exotic species, introducing new diseases