

Sam The Sea Cow

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Program Description: The story of Sam is true. After being freed from a drain pipe, Sam spent thirteen months being cared for at the Seaquarium in Miami, FL. To explore these gentle giants and observe their natural habitat, LeVar travels to Sea World of Florida for an up-close look at manatees. He then assists a rescue crew as they release a manatee they have nursed back to health.

Dead Ringer

Key Words: hazard, animal, trash

Concept: Human trash items can become hazards for animals.



Trash can be a hazard for animals. One of the worst is the plastic six-pack rings used on soda pop cans. As animals move about looking for food, they can get these stuck on their nose, neck or around their legs

Materials: Plastic six-pack carrier, paper, pencils, scissors

1. Slip one loop of a plastic six-pack carrier over a pinky finger, pull the carrier around behind the hand and slip a loop over a thumb and another loop over a finger. The loops should feel snug and limit motion, but not be too tight.
2. Try to get the carrier off without using a free hand or getting help. This is a lot like an animal trying to get a six-pack carrier off its neck or legs.
3. What if the carrier was stuck for good? Are there things that would be hard to do? What effect might the carrier have on an animal's life?
4. Discuss how cutting the plastic loops would make it safer. Trace silhouettes of the carrier so students can decide the best ways to snip the loops, using the smallest number of cuts, to make them safer. (Remind them to consider the very small loops, and that cutting smaller loops often creates large loops.)

Wild Tales



Key Words: stories, characteristics of animals

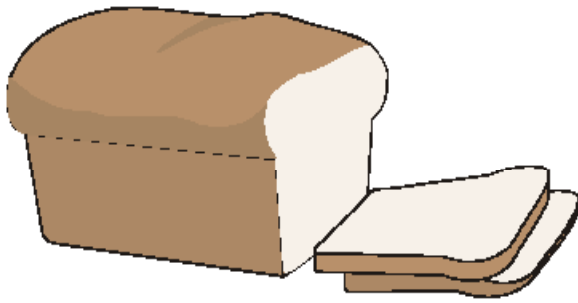
Concept: Stories do not always depict characteristics of animals in a realistic manner.

Much of what we learn about wildlife comes from stories where the characteristics of animals are more human than animal-like.

Materials: A variety of books/stories with animal characters — Aesop’s fables, Mother Goose rhymes, picture books, cartoons

1. Read a variety of stories that have animals doing non-animal activities such as talking, using human tools, or wearing clothing.
2. Have students think about the characteristics of the animals in the stories. What kinds of personalities do the animals have — mean (the big bad wolf), funny (Winnie the Pooh), or silly (Donald Duck)? Do stories portray some animals as consistently mean (e.g. wolves), gentle and kind (e.g. deer), or stupid (e.g. most birds)?
3. How might these story images affect the way people think about animals? What problems could this cause? (They might think wolves are mean and that it’s OK to kill them. They might think baby animals are cute and cuddly, and unsafely approach them.)
4. Discuss why realistic information about animals is important. Use resource books, wildlife magazines, and/or encyclopedias to compile realistic portraits to compare with the story images.

Teacher Note: Attitudes may vary with students who have had a bad experience with an animal (being frightened by a dog), or who have cultural backgrounds that promote spiritual feelings about wildlife. These differences can be handled sensitively by letting students determine for themselves what is realistic.



Breader Not

Key Words: nutrients, crop, organ, absorb

Concept: Animals have nutritional needs that are filled well by natural foods.

Feeding stale bread to birds may seem like a good idea, but it can cause problems. Bread provides few nutrients, and when it's in the bird's crop (the small muscular organ that helps break food into smaller pieces) it can absorb too much water, making the bird unable to eat properly.

Materials: Bread slices cut into fourths, water, food coloring, measuring cups, clear plastic cups

1. Place a fourth of a slice of bread in a clear plastic cup. Tint a half cup of water with food coloring and pour it into the cup. Observe what happens. As the bread soaks up the water, tilt the cup so the water stays near the bread.
2. Discuss with students that birds, like all animals, have certain nutritional needs. Although bread is made from grain, the processing of the grain into flour eliminates important nutrients for birds.
3. Pour the excess water from the pan into a measuring cup. How much water did the bread soak up? How has the appearance of the bread changed? How might this affect a bird? (If a bird eats a lot of food with little nutrition, it will quit eating when full — but will run out of nutrients too soon.)
4. Discuss appropriate ways to feed birds (see the **Raccoons And Ripe Corn — Nice Neighbors** activity).

Worm Wishes

Key Words: castings, soil, worms

Concept: Even small forms of wildlife perform important jobs in the environment.

Wildlife isn't only large animals living in faraway places — it's also the birds, insects and worms in our backyards. Worms are wildlife that do important work. Check out how they turn organic material into soil by setting up a worm farm.

Materials: Plastic bin with lid (about 18"x 24"x 10"), landscape cloth* (about 18"x 24"), newspaper cut into 1" strips, water, peat moss*, soil, brown leaves, 2 cups calcium carbonate*, black plastic (leaf bag), a few square inches of window screen or fine nylon netting, about a dozen or more healthy worms (dug from a garden, collected on rainy day or purchased from a bait shop — "red wigglers" are best)

*available at garden stores

1. Put a 2"-3" layer of peat moss in the plastic bin and mix in a cup of calcium carbonate. Cover the mixture with landscape cloth.
2. Mix crumpled brown leaves with an equal amount of peat moss and mix in a cup of calcium carbonate. Put a 3"-5" layer of this mixture in the bin over the landscape cloth.
3. Spread about 4 cups of fresh fruits and vegetables (no citrus, onions or cooked food) around the edge of the bin (on the leaf & peat moss mixture). Create a diagram to show where the food items were placed and post the diagram above the bin.
4. Spread 2"-3" of loosely packed, damp strips of newspaper (soaked in water and wrung out) on the leaf & peat moss layer, and top with a layer of brown leaves. The bedding layers above the landscape cloth should be at least 7" deep and no less than 1" from the top of the bin.
5. Cut five or six 1" holes, for air circulation, in the sides of the bin near the top. Cover the holes with window screen held in place with tape.
6. Put worms in the bin, and loosely cover the contents with black plastic. Put the lid on.

Teacher Note: The worm farm can be kept in the classroom — it doesn't smell or need much care. Every few days lift the lid to check the food (it may take the worms several days to get hungry) and add more food as needed. Check to make sure the newspaper strips haven't dried out.

In a couple of weeks, the food will disappear and the soil in the bin will have changed. There will be small pellets of rich dirt called castings which are excreted by the worms. There may also be small capsules about the size of a match head which are gold to brown in color — these are worm eggs. Remove some of the castings on a regular basis to keep them from being more than half of the bedding volume and replace them with peat moss and leaves mixed together. Replace the newspapers as needed.