Wildlife Identification
Session Outline
For the Outdoor Skills Program
3rd and 4th Grade Lessons

I. Welcome students and ask group what they remember or learned in the last session.

II. Activity: A Dozen Chances

III. Discussion: What did you learn about an animal today? What will help you tell the difference between a fox and a coyote? What will help you tell the difference between a mountain lion and bobcat?

IV. Activity: Camo Hide & Seek or Lizard Tail Tag

V. Discussion: How does camouflage help animals? How else do animals adapt so they don't get caught by predators?

VI. Frisbee Moment: Ask the students what they enjoyed most about today's session and what they enjoyed the least.

The Outdoor Skills program is a partnership with Nebraska Games & Parks and the UNL Extension/4-H Youth Development Program to provide hands-on lessons for youth during their afterschool time and school days off. It provides the opportunity to master skills in the areas of hunting, fishing, and exploring the outdoors. This educational program is part of the 20 year plan to recruit, develop and retain hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts in Nebraska.

Inventory

Session: Wildlife ID
Curriculum Level: 3 - 4

Kit Materials & Equipment

- ☐ Animal posters: badger, opossum, raccoon, prairie dog, beaver, river otter, muskrat, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, red fox, quail and prairie chicken.
- ☐ Green coins
- ☐ Camo material
- ☐ Crayons

Supplied by Instructor

- ☐ Drawing paper

For information on restocking items contact Julia Plugge at 402-471-6009 or julia.plugge@nebraska.gov

All orders must be placed at least 2 weeks in advance.

Session: Wildlife Identification
Activity: A Dozen Chances

Grade/Age Level:
3-4

Objectives: Participants will
1. Identify wildlife.
2. Classify wildlife characteristics

Method: Students will play a game where they hear clues and make a choice on what animal is being described.

Materials Contained in Tub:
- Posters
- Green Coins

Materials Needed to Conduct Activity:
- Posters of Animals
- Green Coins
- A Dozen Chances Clues
- Pelts
- Hanging material for posters (such as clothespins, tape, binder clips)

Duration: 30 - 45 minutes

Group Size: 12

Setting: Indoors or outdoors

Key Terms: Characteristics

SET Ability:
Categorize/Order/Classify

Fair Exhibit:

Background Information:
To enjoy wildlife, hunt wildlife, or provide habitat for wildlife, a person needs to be able to identify wildlife, and the adaptations on the species. Identifying wildlife by sight is the first way humans learn what wildlife is and how to categorize and use it. As a wildlife observer, being able to know characteristics is key in enjoying wildlife.

Activity
Before the activity

1. Hang up wildlife posters (inside with tape or outside with rope). Put the following animals next to each other:
   1. Badger - Raccoon
   2. Prairie Dog – Opossum
   3. Muskrat– Beaver – River Otter
   4. Mountain Lion –Bobcat
   5. Fox-Coyote
   6. Pheasant – Quail- Prairie Chicken

Procedure

1. Give each student a dozen green coins.
2. Choose an animal to read the clues about.
3. The students will go stand by the animal they "predict" you are reading clues about, putting down a coin in front of the animal they are predicting you are talking about.
4. On clue #12 the students are told which animal the clues are for. If they are at the correct animal they can pick their coins back up.
   Variations: You can go through animals until only one person has coins. Or you can let the kids get their dozen coins back when a new animal starts.

Clues for Badger

I have short legs.
I am a mammal.
I have an excellent nose.
I like to dig.
I am an omnivore (I eat plants and animals).
I am born with a white badge on my forehead.
I am a very powerful animal.
My jaw only moves up and down, it cannot go side to side.
The females or girls are called sow. A male or boy is called a boar.
I like to steal things, so I'm called a thief a lot.
I dig tunnels to make den to live in. My den is called a sett.
I am related to the skunk family.

Opossum Clues

I am about the size of a housecat.
I have 50 teeth.
I use my tail to hang from limbs.
I have black eyes and ears.
I have a long snout, and a pink nose.
My fur is very soft. My fur is grey.
My head is white.
My toes are like fingers, and I have a toe that looks like a thumb on my back foot.
*My tail does not have hair on it, and m*y tail is scaly.
My young live in a pouch on my body.
I am a climber. *I live in large trees or thickets.*
I play dead when you scare me!

Raccoon Clues

I am flat footed like humans and am a slow runner.
I have whiskers.
I can get up to 3 feet long.
I have a black face mask.
My fur looks like salt and pepper.
I like to investigate.
I live near trees, and I like to climb. My front feet are like hands.
I hold my food with my feet, and love sweet corn. I touch my food with my nose before I eat it.
I eat about anything (bugs, fish, plants, meat)
I am active at night.
I love to sprawl out on a large tree limb in the summer.
I have adapted to living among and close to people. I like to stay within one mile of my home.
During winter storms I get together with some of my friends.
I hunt in shallow water by turning over rocks.
I have rings on my tail.

Prairie Dog

I burrow into the ground. I have claws, especially on my front feet.
I am a mammal.
I am 12”-16” long, and I weigh about 2 pounds.
My tail is covered with hair.
My body is a tan or pale brown color. I am white on my tummy side.
I have short legs but large feet.
My head is big and round for my small body size. My eyes are large on my head.
I live on the prairie, in the ground in a colony or town.
I have a mound or hill where I enter my home. I clip the grass around my home so I can
watch for predators.
I peek out of my home, to check for predators and listen for activity above ground
In the summer I spend ½ my day eating. I eat grass.
I have an alarm sound I make to warn my friends of danger and “all clear”.
Interesting Fact:
The black-tailed prairie dog is the only one found in Nebraska.

Beaver Clues

I am the largest rodent in North America.
I may be over 4’ long, and I may weigh over 60 lbs.
I have whiskers.
I hardly have any hair on my tail and it is black.
My fur is dark brown.
My back feet are webs. My front feet are short and have strong claws.
I have a large flat tail that looks like a canoe paddle.
My fur is waterproof.
My eyes are very small compared to my body size. My nose and eyes close tightly under water.
My stomach can digest tree bark.
I have 2 big buck teeth, and my *2 teeth grow constantly.*
I live along streams, rivers and small lakes. I dam up rivers sometimes with my home called a den.
Interesting Fact: Beavers can stay underwater for almost 20 minutes.

River Otter Clues

I have whiskers, and use them to “touch” my food.
I can slide 10 feet or more in the snow.
My body is long and slender.
My ears are small, and my nose is big on my face.
The upper part of my body is dark brown. My underside is brown.
My legs are short with five webbed toes on each foot.
Adults are 3-4 feet long, and weigh about 20 pounds.
I live near water. My ears and nose close when I go under water.
I use my tail to help me swim.
My eyes are on the top of my head so I can see when swimming.
I have oily fur to protect me in cold water.
I like to play, wrestling, chasing, tossing and diving off rocks, and I love to slide down a wet bank.

Muskrat Clues

I am a mammal that looks like a big rat.
I have a musty odor that comes from my body.
I weigh 2-3 pounds, and I am about 2 feet long.
I have waterproof fur, and it is short thick fur.
My fur is dark brown on my back, and lighter brown on my sides.
My tail has no hair on it, and is scaly. It helps me swim.
My tail is flattened vertically, and when I walk, my tail drags on the ground.
I can swim underwater for about 15 minutes.
My hind feet are partially webbed.
I have 4 large front teeth. My front teeth continue to grow.
I stay under the ice all winter, and I store a lot of body fat for the long winter.
I am a vegetarian, eating only plants.
Interesting Fact: Muskrats live about 1 year.

Mountain Lion Clues

I am a feline, and I have whiskers.
I can weigh up to 150 pounds.
My coat is tan.
I have a black tipped tail, and I have dark spots behind my ears.
I live in rough wooded areas.
I am most active from dusk (when the sun goes down) to dawn (when the sun comes up).
I eat deer the most. After I kill my prey, and drag it to another place and when I am done eating, I cover it up to hide it.
I scratch trees to mark my area.
I can get up to 8 feet long from the tip of my nose to the tip of my tail. I am almost 3 feet tall.
My head is round.
I have claws but they don't show up in my tracks. My claws retract back into my foot.
I can leap up to 18 feet up in the air or 30 feet horizontal, and I run about 40 miles per hour.
Interesting Fact: The mountain lion eats about anything (bugs, rabbits, deer), but has to eat meat to survive.

Bobcat Clues

My back legs are longer than my front legs.
My claws retract back into my foot. I have claws but they don't show up in my tracks.
I am a feline, and I have whiskers.
I can live along the forest edge, in river bottoms, or around rocky ledges.
I weigh 15-35 pounds, *I can get up to 4 feet long and 2 feet tall.*
I have a short tail. I am named after my short tail.
I am brownish red, and *have dark spots. My spotted coat acts as camouflage.*
I hunt at dusk and dawn and at night but sleep during the day.
Cotton tail rabbits are my favorite food, and I cover my food with snow or leaves and sticks to save some for a later meal.
I have pointy ears, and black tips on my ears.
I have golden eyes.
I can jump 8 feet, and I am an excellent climber.

Coyote

I am related to the dog. My babies are called pups.
I weigh 20-35 pounds.
I am 4-5 feet long from the tip of my nose to the tip of my tail.
My fur is rough on the outside but soft by my body.
I have a bushy black tipped tail.
I have yellow eyes.
My ears are always up.
My fur is grey, brown or reddish.
I am very smart, and I have a big brain.
I am the most vocal mammal in Nebraska using howls and yips to communicate with my family.
I am most active at dusk and dawn.
I mark my area by poop and pee.
Interesting Fact: Coyotes live closer to ranching land than crop land. They make farmers and ranchers mad because they eat their sheep and young calves.

Fox

I am related to a dog.
I am a mammal.
I have a long, narrow snout.
I have a bushy tail.
People think that I am red.
My babies are called kits, pups, and cubs.
I travel in troops.
I weigh 10-13 pounds as an adult.
My tail has white on the end.
I pounce on my prey.
I eat rodents, and sometimes grasshoppers or berries.
This animal mates for life. This means one girl and one boy have babies together for their whole life.

Pheasant

I eat grains, seeds, and bugs.
I weigh between 1-5 pounds.
I am 2-3 feet in length.
I lay eggs to have babies.
Feathers cover my body.
I am a bird.
The boy bird is called a rooster.
The girl bird is called a hen.
The males have bright colors on their head.
The girls are dull in color.
I live in tall grasses, and along the edge of fields.
I have a ring around my neck.

Quail

I like to live in the woody areas such as tree wind breaks.
I live in a group called a covey.
I lay eggs to have babies. I am a bird.
I make a nest like a bowl and put grass over the top.
I eat seeds.
My chicks, when they are born, are the size of a bumblebee.
I weigh a ½ pound.
I fly in short hops.
I fly along the ground to catch insects or escape predators.
This bird spends their time in grassy habitat at night.
When they roost, all their tails are in the circle with their heads pointing out.
I leave my covey at sunrise to go find food.

Prairie Chicken

We call dating a girl and boy “booming”
My wings are round.
My tail is short, round and dark.
The boys have a comb over their eyes this is a yellow-orange color.
I have a patch of orange on my neck.
I live on the prairie.
I like to live in tall grasses, but can live on agricultural land too.
I eat seeds and fruit, and in the summer I snack on insects and green plants too.
When the snow is thick, I dive into the snow to keep warm.
I am territorial and will defend my ground where I bring my girl chickens and my babies.
When I lay eggs in a nest, it is called a clutch. I lay 5-17 eggs in my nest.
Pheasants steal my nest and put their eggs in it, so my eggs don’t hatch.

1. Write a fact underneath each animal's name.

A Wildlife Scientist must be able to tell the difference in animals. The scientist has to know the name of each animal. The scientist watches the animal, and then makes notes on behavior or markings on their body. Now it is your turn to be a wildlife scientist!

2. Draw a line from each animal's name to the animal's picture.

Badger

Beaver

Bobcat

Coyote

Fox

Mountain Lion

Muskrat

Opossum

Pheasant

Prairie Chicken

Prairie Dog

Quail

Raccoon

River Otter

Session: Wildlife Identification
Activity: Camo Hide & Seek

Grade/Age Level:
3-4

Objectives: Participants will learn the properties of camouflage

Method: Students will play hide & seek using camouflage adaptations

Materials Contained in Tub:

- 1 ½ yard camo material

Materials Needed to Conduct Activity:

Camo Material

Duration: 30 minutes

Group Size: any

Setting: Indoors or outdoors

Key Terms: Camouflage

SET Ability: Problem Solve

Fair Exhibit:

Background Information:

Camouflage is an important part of wildlife adapting in the wild. Camouflage is also an important part of wildlife watchers and hunters being able to get up close with wildlife so they can take that perfect shot with a firearm or a camera. Camo is the blending in to one's habitat. Today students will take turns covering him/herself with camo and then hiding from the rest of the group.

Activity

Before the activity

1. Scout out an area where students can hide and blend with camo.

Procedure

1. Explain camouflage to the group. Camouflage is when an animal blends into its' surroundings such as a brown deer staying around brown tree trunks, or a green frog on a tree leaf.
2. Everyone has a job in this game. The person(s) hiding has the job of camouflaging him/herself by finding a place to hide where they blend into the vegetation. The hiders are the prey.
3. The group of kids not hiding need to use their predatory skills and see how close they can get to the prey.
4. When the prey hears a predator, they need to pop up from the cover and say "stop". Then give points for whoever got closest without the prey hearing them.
5. Discussion: What are some skills that make a good predator? What are some skills they make prey stay safe?

This game can also be played like Sardines. When a predator finds a prey, they hide with the prey.