

Animals Around Us

Adapted from [Who are My Neighbors? An Urban Ecology Lesson Plan](#)

Grades 6-12

Students learn about urban ecology by performing a survey of urban wildlife.

Materials:

- Weather appropriate clothing
- Pen/pencil for each student
- Nature Journals or data sheets
- Clipboard for each student/group
- Field guide for each student/group (Suggested: Peterson First Guide to Urban Wildlife. Alternatives: iNaturalist app for smartphone; printouts from the internet)
- Sheet of poster board or whiteboard



Procedure:

1. Go to maeoe.com/mipines and use the MiPINES Map to find a nature space to visit. Get prepared to take your students off-campus. Set clear and firm expectations for being safe and smart outside.
2. Ask students to describe the kinds of nature they see in their neighborhood. Ask questions like "What is 'nature'?" and "Where is nature found?" Define and explain the term "urban ecology."
3. Break students into groups and give each group a field guide to share. Make sure each student has brought their nature journal or clipboard and data sheet. Give a brief overview of how to use the field guides, and ask students to focus on observations rather than names.
4. Let students explore the area on their own, recording their observations as they go. Stay nearby and help students if necessary.
5. Bring all the groups back together. Ask students to share their observations. Ask leading questions if needed (e.g. "What types of animals did you find?", "How many were there?", "What animals were more common?", etc.)
6. Discuss what animals need in an environment (food, water, shelter, space). Ask the students if they think that these animals are finding what they need.
7. In the classroom, have the students write their results on the poster or whiteboard. Have columns for the general type of animal (e.g. Birds, Mammals, Insects, etc.), the "specific" type (e.g. Starling, Sparrow, Bee, Squirrel, etc.), and the number for each specific type.

Extension: Have each student research the habitat needs of an animal they discovered. Another day, have the class work together to sketch a "design" of a city park that meets the needs of the animals they studied.