

Urban Nature Search

Adapted from [ProjectWILD](#)

Grades K-12

Students observe and record the animals they see in an urban nature space.

Materials:

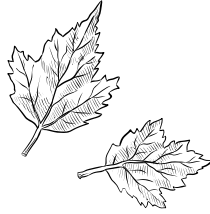
- [What's Wild in Your City? Activity Cards](#), (Select the appropriate deck depending on age group)
- Observation Journals/ Notebooks
- Timer
- Pencils
- Colored pencils or crayons



Procedure:

1. Go to maeoe.com/mipines and use the MiPINES Map to find an urban nature space to visit. Get prepared to take your students off-campus. Set clear and firm expectations for being safe and smart outside.
2. Print and cut the appropriate What's Wild in Your City? cards for your grade band.
3. After arriving at your urban nature space, ask students to describe "wildlife". What kinds of creatures are wildlife? How do you know?
4. Explore ways to document the presence of wildlife. You might not see wildlife directly, but you can find evidence of wildlife if you know how to look. What kinds of evidence can you use to document wildlife? (Answers: tracks, webs, droppings, nests, dens, feathers, fur, etc.)
5. Split students into groups of two or three. Have each group take one What's Wild in Your City? Activity Card.
6. Set a timer for 15-20 minutes.
7. Using the card to guide them, students explore the nature space. For grades 3-12, students record their findings in their observation journals. They can write down their observations in words or use the colored pencils or crayons to sketch what they see.
8. After the timer ends, call all students back together. Discuss and share your findings.

Can you find....



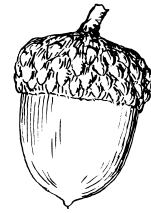
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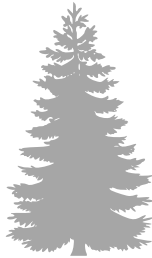
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Can you find....



Can you find....



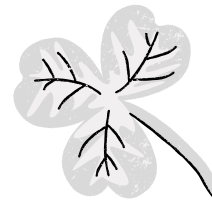
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Can you find....



Can you find....



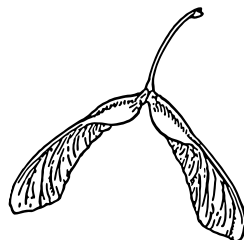
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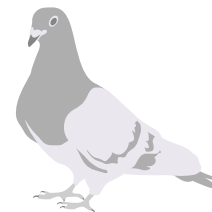
Can you find....



Can you find....



Can you find....



Tally, describe, and sketch different kinds of plants growing on the north and south sides of buildings. What differences do you see? Can you measure differences between these locations, such as temperature variations? Sun and shade? Moisture and evaporation?

Look for animals establishing a "territory." Try to map the animals' territory. For example, you might see a bird chasing away another bird, or ants protecting their mound.

Try to observe a pollinator in action. Pollinators may be bees, wasps, moths, and even ants. Bees cross-pollinate flowers while gathering nectar for the production of honey. Note how pollen sticks to the hair on the bee's legs.

Sketch trees and list their contributions to the community. For example, what effect do trees have on wind? Shade and temperature? Homes for wildlife? Air quality?

Find mulch around trees and shrubs or in flower beds. Record any evidence or observation of life forms. What characteristics of mulch would be helpful to sustain life?

Look for evidence of components of habitat. Match animals with their habitat needs (food, water, shelter, and space in appropriate arrangement). Predict what animals should be able to live in these habitats.

Look for birds. Tally the numbers of different kinds of birds you see. (Feel free to make up names for birds you don't know.) Watch the birds' behavior. Are they on the ground, in bushes, in trees, on powerlines or ledges of buildings? If they are feeding, what do they eat? Can you see any nests, and if so, where are they? Were the birds making sounds? If so, describe them.

Look for animals or their signs. Slowly lift rocks or fallen logs. Look for trails, nests, scat (droppings), feathers, fur, and other signs, and try to determine which animals left them.

Who likes lichen? Predict what plants and animals have a direct or indirect relationship with lichen. (Lichen will be found growing on rocks, tree trunks, and even soil. Lichen is really algae and fungi in symbiosis with its living host.)

Trace water's path in an area, such as on one street, around one tree, or down a hillside. Look for evidence of erosion or freezing and thawing on sidewalks and buildings. Does anything depend on this water?

Look for evidence of predator and prey relationships. Is it predator or prey? What physical characteristics or behavior do you observe that would help it in a predator-prey situation?

Look for evidence of food chains. For example, if you observe insects, look for partially eaten, damaged, or mutilated leaves. Then look for what eats the insects. Draw a food chain and identify the parts.