

Instructor Introduction

Learning About Wildlife (Grades K-2)

Students will learn the difference between wild and domestic animals and why wild animals should not be kept as pets.

Excerpts from the MSPCA's Statements of Belief:

“The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals believes that, for fundamental humane reasons, which consider both the quality of life of individual animals, and wildlife as species, wild animals should be permitted to exist undisturbed in their native environments. Furthermore, captive wildlife, by virtue of its confinement, generally suffers varying degrees of physiological and/or psychological deprivation, which can impact upon the animals’ general well-being.”

“The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals believes that all animals exist in a dynamic state of interdependence with their environment, and that no animal is inherently a “nuisance” or “pest” animal.”

The following bullets list the important elements behind this lesson plan. For more information on any wildlife questions, please visit www.livingwithwildlife.org, a companion program to the MSPCA, or contact an MSPCA Education Coordinator.

- companion animals (domestic animals, pets) are dependent on humans to provide for their care and their basic needs: food, water, shelter, exercise; wild animals are capable of providing these needs themselves
- though we should not attempt to provide for a wild animal’s needs, it is important that we help protect and preserve wildlife habitats to ensure their survival
- companion animals cannot survive in the wild; they are not capable of finding food or shelter, and don’t have the ability to protect themselves from serious dangers
- animals that are domesticated have been selectively bred for specific “tame” traits over many generations; they are not wild animals that are “made” domestic by living with humans
- wild animals should not be kept as pets for many reasons:
 - it is illegal to keep wild animals as pets
 - it is often very stressful for them to live in confinement
 - most wild animals are afraid of people; it is not in their nature to get “used” to them
 - many wild animals will be destructive in a house by chewing or shredding
 - many wild animals will bite or scratch if they feel threatened
 - wild animals can carry diseases that are very dangerous to humans and other animals, including rabies
 - capturing a wild animal can impact the welfare of other animals (mate, offspring) that depend of that animal for food and protection
 - not all wildlife are greatly understood, therefore we don’t always know how to best meet their needs, including diet, social interactions, and appropriate housing

- baby animals and birds' eggs and nests should not be disturbed by adults or kids; if an adult suspects that an animal is injured or orphaned, they should consult www.livingwithwildlife.org for information on what to do