

## Exploring Animals in the Wild

This year, we plan to intentionally focus on building our relationships with the environment by studying **ANIMALS IN THE WILD** for our Whole School Unit, including both a local and a global emphasis. The timing of this unit in February and early March coincides with the [United Nations World Wildlife Day](#) (March 3, 2018) and ends just before the [US National Wildlife Week](#) (March 14-18, 2018). Studying Animals in the Wild will enable us to discover 1) the safe ways we can observe animals in their natural habitats, 2) the life science features of animals and their life cycles, adaptations to the food, water, shelter, etc. available in their habitats, and ways that communication and interdependence help them meet their needs, 3) the physical science properties of animals' physical features, homes, etc., 4) the earth science aspects of animal behavior based on the weather and seasons, 5) the historical, social, and cultural changes related to humans' environmental responsibility, and 6) the representation of animals in literature and the visual, dramatic, movement, and musical arts.



In preparation for the unit, our educators visited the Humane Animal Rescue Wildlife Center (<https://www.humaneanimalrescue.org/wildlife-rehabilitation-center/i-found-an-injured-wild-animal/>) during our professional development time prior to the beginning of school. "The Wildlife Center is a fully licensed wildlife rehabilitation clinic that specializes in the care and treatment of injured, orphaned, and ill native Pennsylvanian wildlife. All animals are admitted to the clinic with the goal of releasing them back into the wild as healthy individuals." We

anticipate having some of the wildlife center's "educational ambassadors" visit our classrooms during the unit in February. Meanwhile, we encourage your family to notice the animals you encounter near your home and in your neighborhood parks. In my backyard in Crafton Heights, I've seen birds, insects, and a variety of mammals, including squirrels, raccoons, opossums, and deer. I even saw a coyote walking on a city street near my home at dusk one night recently. If you are interested in helping to design the unit or have ideas to share, please contact me ([sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu)) or your child's teacher.



## Perhaps you wondered ...

**why we organize our curriculum into thematic units.**

Studying topics in depth builds children's knowledge base, starting with what they already know and creating a network of concepts that are richly connected in ways that help children apply their knowledge to new contexts. We combine verbal and visual representations and provide a variety of activities to help them acquire, strengthen, and refine concepts via experimentation, stories, dramatic play, art, games, technology activities, etc. Children converse and reason in more sophisticated ways about content they understand, so themes provide a foundation for other cognitive challenges.

Across the school year, we include a variety of topics that span literature, social studies, science (life, physical, and earth & space), and the arts. In every unit, we include activities that strengthen children's skills in all of our developmental domains: self-esteem & independence, interaction & cooperation, communication, discovery & exploration, physical capabilities / health & safety, and artistic expression & appreciation.