

CASCADES RAPTOR CENTER

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Raptor Experience Activities

1. Write a Short Story or Poem using one of the resident Cascades Raptor Center birds as the main character or theme. Each of the CRC raptors is the hero of their own life story. Short descriptions of each of the CRC permanent residents can be found on the CRC website: www.eraptors.org.
2. Make an Illustrated Book. In small groups, have students create a book using some of the new vocabulary words they learned during the CRC presentation. The entries should include a picture and an explanation of the word. The students can also use the word in a sentence. Assemble the entries into a book for the students to look at all year long.
3. Create Crossword Puzzles or Word Searches using the new vocabulary words. Ask each student for a new word that they learned during the CRC presentation. After creating a list of new words, students can work in small groups to create a word puzzle and then they could exchange their puzzle with another group in class to complete each other's puzzle.
4. Raptor Trading Cards. Raptors are super athletes and students can make trading cards featuring their favorite raptor. On one side of the card the students can draw their featured raptor. On the other side they can fill out the Vital Statistics of their featured raptor. Cards could include Common Name, Scientific Name, Height, Weight, Wingspan, Color/ Markings, Habitat, Hunting Style, Prey and Threats to Survival. Have students share their information with other students.
5. Read one of the many Nature-themed Books from the CRC book list or your own school library and share the story with the class.
6. Make Student Wingspans. Students can practice their measurement skills while learning that their arm length is relevant to the wingspan of birds. You will need a butcher paper, coloring tools and scissors. Each student can draw, cut out and color a life-sized wingspan of their favorite raptor. Some birds have wingspans over six feet! The students can draw the feather patterns that represent their selected bird. Wings make an excellent display on the classroom walls. For sturdier, wearable wings, students may attach the wings to cardboard and then attach straps that fit around their arms.

7. Spiders are Predators Too. Predators come in all different sizes! Spiders are also some of nature's most awesome yet under appreciated predators. They help keep our environment free of insects such as mosquitoes and flies. You can have your students systematically use math and observational skills to determine which type of spider web has the most prey items in it. Your students will need a pencil, paper, clipboard and some corners or bushes around school to examine for spider webs. Students can look carefully for spider webs, noting their location, their shape and the number of prey items caught in the web. Your students can answer such questions as "What location of spider webs caught the most prey?" or "Which type of web did we find the most in our experiment?"
8. Map a Predator's Home Range. This activity helps students practice their math skills, research skills and map skills while examining the differences between a predator's home range and that of its prey. Students will choose their favorite predator and find out the size of its home range. A home range is the area a typical animal utilizes in its search for food, shelter and water. Included in the students' research could be natural history information about the species that they choose. Students would want to note any special requirements that the species may need for survival. For example, the Northern Spotted Owl requires a large, hollow snag for nesting. Or a Peregrine Falcon may require a cliff side or other suitable nesting site. Students then can draw an imaginary home range map for their species including appropriate scale, habitat features and the home ranges of prey species within the predator's home range. To add a twist to this activity, students can make their own personal home ranges by drawing a map of home, school, shops, restaurants, and parks that they frequently visit. Remember to have students draw their maps to scale.
9. Animals in Your Neighborhood. After a CRC presentation many students are more observant of the animals around them. Students can learn about other wild animals that live in their communities. Since many students confuse the word "animal" with "mammals" this exercise can help demonstrate to students that insects, birds, reptiles, fish and amphibians are also animals. Ask students what wild animals they have seen in their neighborhoods. Don't forget about the insects. These animals can be found in almost every environment. You can make a list of the wild animals that students have seen in their environment. To practice research skills, students could find out more about each species. Which of these animals are predators, which are scavengers or maybe omnivores or herbivores? Just because you see a bird eating seeds one day doesn't mean that bird isn't a predator too. Hummingbirds are often seen at feeders that provide sugar water but they also are predators; catching insects is a vital part of their diet. Once students gather information on the many different animals they see, they can tally in which habitat types they find the most animals. Ask students if they find more animals in the tree filled park or on the grass covered baseball field. You can continue wild animal reports throughout the school year. Have students add newly spotted wild animals to their classroom list as the year goes by.

10. The book Pass the Energy, Please! By Barbara Shaw McKinney is a rhyming examination of the connectedness of all of the world's organisms. All animals rely on something else for the energy they need to survive. After all, every thing is someone's lunch. After reading the book as a class, students can take one of the many animals featured in the book and find out more about that animal. Students can draw their featured animal on one side of a large index card and on the other side of the card they can write information about that species that they discovered. Students can then use the cards as reminder tools when they share the details about their species with their classmates. Once all the cards are completed you can take a large sheet of paper and make a food web of all the creatures featured in the book. Draw lines between the animals that have a food web relationship. Don't forget to first put the sun (the primary provider of energy) and plants (the transformers of sun energy to usable energy) on the paper.

To expand on this activity, students can participate in the string game. Each student is assigned a role in the food web. On a sticky note, write the student's role such as rabbit, hawk, sun, water, grass, tree, beetle, snake, mouse, etc. Each student then has a turn to toss the ball of sting to another student to which they are connected in the food web. The student should explain how they are connected at each toss of the ball of string.

11. Create Wildlife Habitat. Consider adopting a piece of habitat on or around your school grounds and work as a group to build better wildlife habitat. You can start with wildlife food. One of the easiest ways to provide food for wildlife is by planting native plants. Native plants have evolved with the animals that live in your area and once they are in the ground they don't need much maintenance. For a ideas on how to create wildlife habitat for your school go to: <http://www.nwf.org/How-to-Help/Garden-for-Wildlife/Schoolyard-Habitats.aspx> Many local agencies and non-profit groups are busy at work trying to enhance and protect the native plants in your area. You could invite a professional to come and speak with your students about making a native plant habitat plan.

Secondly, you might also want to provide cover and places to nest. Wildlife needs a place to feel safe, watch for predators and have a safe location for raising their young. Many shrubs provide a place to hide between leaves and branches. Brush piles provide hiding and nesting areas for birds. You can also use logs, rocks and sticks on the ground to provide hiding places for reptiles and amphibians. You can use an old upside down clay pot to make a toad abode. Once your students have habitat created, they may be able to watch animals in action from a distance. This allows students to learn more about the preferences of each species they are interested in.

Don't forget animals need water too. Installing and maintaining a bird bath gives many animals day and night access to water. For example, Western Screech Owls love to take baths late at night and may be living near your school. You might even check your bird bath for feathers and try to identify the birds that have visited your bath. Remember to leave the feathers where you found them after you are finished examining them.

Either before or after the students begin working on the habitat project; they can make a Habitat Box. Take a shoe box, without a lid, and lay it on its side. Decorate the box with paper, paint, pebbles, twigs, moss or any other object that would be found in the habitat they have chosen. Then, out of clay, the students can sculpt an animal to place in their habitat.