



Lesson 3: The Balancing Act

Theme

It's tricky to balance the needs of wildlife populations, but it's even trickier when you take into account the needs of people too!

Learning Objectives

Students will learn about the role of regulated hunting and trapping in managing wildlife populations, as well as coexistence strategies for living alongside wildlife. The concepts of cultural carrying capacity, fragmentation, and community behavior change will be explored with special focus on the Eastern coyote.

Corresponding Activities for this Lesson

Where Do You Stand on Hunting and Trapping?

Materials

- Lesson 3 PowerPoint
- Tennis ball
- Fisher, fox, coyote, and raccoon skulls
- Coyote and raccoon pelts
- Aluminum can “coyote shaker”

Lesson

- 1. Explain to students that today we will be learning about balancing the needs of wildlife and people in the ecosystem.**
- 2. Start things off with a challenge! Ask students to take turns trying to balance a tennis ball on their heads. You can ask students to sit, stand, walk, jog, or hop while balancing the ball depending on the students' age or eagerness to try out their balancing skills.**
 - After having some fun with the balancing challenge, ask students if they thought it was easy or hard to keep the tennis ball on their head.
 - If you think it was easy, maybe you just have a good sense of balance, but generally, this is pretty tricky! Explain to students that balancing the needs of people and wildlife can be very tricky as well.

- 3. Ask students to come up with some ideas about why it might be challenging for biologists to balance these needs. Write ideas down on the board, and guide students with questions:**
- 4. What do all animals (including people) need to survive?**
 - What are some things that animals might do that bother or scare people? What problems might wildlife cause for people?
 - What are some things that people might do that make it harder for wildlife to survive? What problems can people cause for wildlife?
- 5. Show students the slides focused on the Eastern coyote as an example of a species that presents some conservation and management challenges.**
 - The notes section of the PowerPoint contains details about the information in the slides. This is a good time to pass around the coyote natural artifacts!
- 6. Explain to students that the problems associated with coyotes could apply to any wild animal, especially other small predators like fishers, foxes, and raccoons.**
 - This is a good time to explore some of the other skulls in the kit.
- 7. Ask students to brainstorm some potential solutions to the problems that these animals can cause for people.**
 - Record ideas on the board, then show students the solutions slide to confirm their ideas or add some new ones to their existing list.
- 8. Show students the drawing of a backyard, and ask them to think like a wild critter. What in this picture might be considered an attractant for wildlife? What could be done to make this yard less inviting for problematic animals?**
 - After doing this exercise with the drawing, you could extend it further by walking around the school yard, neighborhood, or local park to look for examples in real life.
- 9. Finish up the lesson by running through a round of “Where Do You Stand on Hunting and Trapping?” to give students the opportunity to assess their own opinions of hunting, trapping, and wildlife conservation and management based on what they have learned.**
 - Alternatively, you can start this entire unit with a round of this activity, and then repeat the activity at the end of Lesson 3. A discussion about how students’ perspectives may have changed or stayed the same based on what they learned in the unit could follow.