

Watch And Learn



Objectives

Students practice observation skills as they document an animal's behavior.

Materials

- animal(s) to observe (Examples: fish, tadpole, ladybug, rabbit, hermit crab, lizard, snake, hamster, caterpillar, snail, turtle, bird)
- paper and pencil
- (optional) hand lens

Background

Ethology is the study of an animal's behavior. The first step in learning about animal behavior is to observe and document the behavior. Observers must be careful not to attribute human characteristics or motivations to the animals they study.

Action

1. Introduce students to the animal(s). Find out how much they already know about that animal and make a list on the board.
2. Schedule students one at a time or in small groups of two or three to observe the animal for a specified period of time.
3. Students draw or write what they see the animal do during the observation period.
4. When all students have observed the animal, make a list of all the behaviors they saw the animal do. Keep track of how many students (or student groups) observed each behavior.
5. Ask students to formulate questions about the animal's behavior. After observing the animal, what are they curious about? Write all the questions on the board.
6. As a group, see if you can answer any of the questions by further observation or by using reference materials such as publications or the Internet.