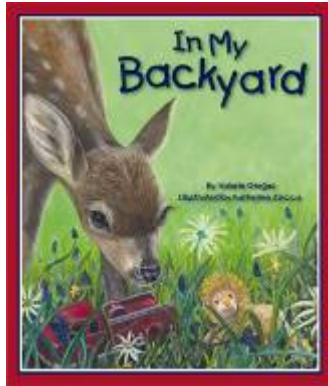


# Teaching Activities

for



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Teaching Activities are intended for use at home, in the classroom, and during story-times.

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## Questions to ask children before reading the book

- What do you think the book is about by looking at the cover? (or one or two of the inside illustrations) *Sometimes it is easy to tell from the cover, other times it is not.*
- What does the cover illustration show?
- Does the title tell you what the book is about?

## What do children already know?

- Young children are naturally inquisitive and are sponges for information. The whole purpose of this activity is to help children verify the information they know (or think they know) and to get them thinking “beyond the box” about a particular subject.
- The children should write down their “concepts” (or adults for them if the children are not yet writing) on the provided chart found on the next page.
- Use the questions to get children thinking about what they already know. Feel free to add more questions or thoughts according to the child(ren) involved.

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## What do children already know—activity chart

Ask children to write down what they think they know before reading the book. If the information is verified while reading the book, check “yes.” If the information is wrong, mark “no” and cross it off. Write the correct information in another section, below. Make a note of how you verify the information.

<u>What do I think I know?</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Verified</u>
What are some animals that might live in your backyard?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
What are some names of baby animals?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
Do all animals have one, two, or three babies at a time?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
What are some signs that animals have been in your yard?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
Should you touch or play with a wild animal?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
What should you do if you find an injured wild animal?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other

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**Use this chart for any other thoughts the children might have.**

<u>What do I think I know?</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Verified</u>
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other

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## After reading the book—writing prompts & thinking it through

- Did the cover “tell” you what the book was about?
- If not, how does the illustration on the front relate to the story?
- Draw your own cover
- Can you think of another title for the book?
- After reading *In My Backyard*, did any of the group names or baby names surprise you?
- Many animals have more than one group or baby name. Can you think of any different group or baby names for each animal? Research each animal to see how many you can find for each. Use some of the links found at [www.sylvandellpublishing.com](http://www.sylvandellpublishing.com) or [www.valariegiogas.com](http://www.valariegiogas.com).
- Using the rhyme scheme of *In My Backyard*, write your own stanzas for other

### Re-read the book looking for more information

Go back and re-read the book studying each page carefully.

- What, if any, facts are mentioned in the text?
- What are some of the baby animal names?
- What are some of the animal group names?
- What can be seen or inferred from the illustrations that is not or are not mentioned in the text?
- What, if anything, can be inferred from the text?

### Food for thought or look it up

Make a list of all the animals you can think of that are called:

- Cubs
- Calves
- Pups
- Babies
- Hatchlings
- Chicks
- Kittens
- Colt

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## What do children already know—activity conclusion

- Do the children have any more questions about backyard and woodland animals? If so, write them down on the chart.
- Identify whether the information was verified and how.
- If the concept is correct, make a note of how the information was confirmed (illustration, in text, in fun fact notes)
- If the concept was not correct, what IS the correct information – with above confirmation notes as above.
- If the concept was neither confirmed nor denied, look the information up in a reliable source and note where it was confirmed.
- Wrap it all up by adding notes with new information that they learned either through the reading or the research while looking up something else.

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## Language Arts

### Developing a vocabulary “word wall”

If using the book as a way to introduce a topic or subject, this is also a great way to introduce subject-related vocabulary words. If you don't have the time (or the inclination) to develop the word wall by playing the Vocabulary Game (below), we have provided a vocabulary list for you.

Vocabulary words for the “word wall” may be written on index cards, on a poster board, or on a chalk board. If writing on poster board or chalk board, you might want to sort into noun, verbs, etc. right away to save a step later. Leaving the words posted (even on a refrigerator at home) allows the children to see and think about them frequently.

### Vocabulary game

This activity is designed to get children thinking of vocabulary words which will then be used as the beginning vocabulary list for a science lesson.

Select an illustration and give children a specific length of time (five minutes?) to write down all the words the children can think of about the particular subject. *If you do not have classroom sets of the book, it is helpful to project an illustration on a white board. Check Web site ([www.ArbordalePublishing.com](http://www.ArbordalePublishing.com)) for book “previews” that may be used for this purpose.*

Their word list should include anything and everything that comes to mind, including nouns, verbs and adjectives. At the end of the time period, have each child take turns reading a word from his/her list. If anyone else has the word, they do nothing. If however, they are the only one with the word, they should circle it. While reading the list, one person should write the word on a flashcard or large index card and post it on a bulletin board or wall.

At the end, the child with the most words circled “wins.” And you have a start to your science vocabulary list. *Note if children use an incorrect word, this is a good time to explain the proper word or the proper usage.*

### Putting it all together

The following activities may be done all together or over a period of several days.

- Continue to add words to the vocabulary list as children think of them.
- Sort vocabulary words into nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. and write what it is on the back of the card. When the cards are turned over, all you will see is “noun,” etc. *(These can then be used to create silly sentences, below)*
- Now sort the vocabulary words into more specific categories. For example, nouns can be divided into plants, animals, rocks, minerals, etc. They can be divided into living/non-living, or into habitat-related words.
- Have children create sentences using their vocabulary words. Each sentence could be written on a separate slip of paper.
- Have children (individually or in small groups) sort and put sentences into informative paragraphs or a story.
- Edit and re-write paragraphs into one informative paper or a story.

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# In My Backyard

## Suggested vocabulary list

<u>Nouns</u>	<u>verbs</u>	<u>adjectives</u>
deer	born	one
porcupine	talk	two
squirrel	slither	three
raccoon	grunt	four
rabbit	chew	five
mole	grow	six
skunk	hide	seven
snake		eight
fox		nine
grasshopper		ten
doe		
cub		
pup		
snakelets		
hatchlings		
nymphs		
backyard		
prickle		
scurry		
nest		
nursery		
labor		
surfeit		
kits		
pit		
skulk		
swarm		

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# In My Backyard

## Silly sentence structure activity

This is a fun activity that develops both an understanding of sentence structure and the science subject. Use words from the “word wall” to fill in the blanks. After completing silly sentences for fun, have children try to fill in the proper words by looking for the information in the book.

Baby deer are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

Baby porcupines are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

Baby squirrels are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

Baby raccoons are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

Baby bunnies are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

Baby moles are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

Baby skinks are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

Baby foxes are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

Baby grasshoppers are called \_\_\_\_\_ s.  
noun

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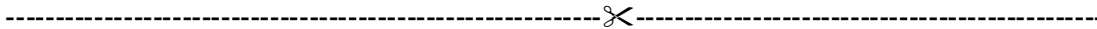
## ***In My Backyard***

### Sequence sentence strips

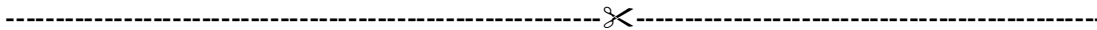
Preparation: Cut into sentence strips, laminate if desired, and place in a "center." Have children put the events in order. Children may work alone or in small groups. Cards are in order but should be mixed up when cut apart.



In my backyard I can see  
groups of baby animals  
all around me.  
They creep, they crawl, they run and hide.  
They munch, they crunch, they sleep outside.



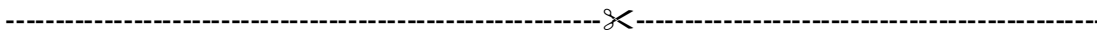
In my backyard I can see  
one doe's fawn  
peeking at me.  
He sees me through the leaves and brush,  
then runs to mama in a rush.



In my backyard I can see  
a prickle of two pups  
grunting at me.  
They gnaw on rusty hoes and rakes,  
then chew on twigs and tree bark flakes.



In my backyard I can see  
a scurry of three pups  
gazing at me.  
It's very crowded in their nest,  
which makes it really hard to rest.



In my backyard I can see  
a nursery of four cubs  
spying on me.  
At night they search inside our trash.  
I always hear the barrels crash.

---

In my backyard I can see  
a nest of five bunnies  
twitching at me.  
They've gotten through the garden gate.  
Just look at all the plants they ate.

---

In my backyard I can see  
a labor of six pups  
running from me.  
They cannot see their lunch of worms,  
but they can hear them as they squirm.

---

In my backyard I can see  
a surfeit of seven kits  
squinting at me.  
They hunt for grubs and ants and snails,  
and sometimes eat the eggs of quails.

---

In my backyard I can see  
a pit of eight hatchlings  
slithering near me.  
They twist amongst the leaves and vines  
and blend into a swirled design.

---

In my backyard I can see  
a skulk of nine pups  
sleeping near me.  
They cuddle in their den all day,  
then late at night they look for prey.



In my backyard I can see  
a swarm of ten nymphs  
chirping at me.  
They listen to their mother's sound  
and munch on leaves that they have found.



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# In My Backyard

## Word search

Find the hidden words. Even non-reading children can try to match letters to letters to find the words! Easy – words go up to down or left to right.

For older children, identify the coordinates of the first letter in each word (number, letter).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	G	R	A	S	S	H	O	P	P	E	R
2	B	A	D	K	E	Y	U	O	D	A	A
3	O	B	O	U	E	E	T	P	A	T	B
4	Y	B	S	N	A	K	E	F	D	U	B
5	D	I	U	K	T	C	M	O	M	N	I
6	E	T	N	S	H	O	P	X	O	A	T
7	E	S	Q	U	I	R	R	E	L	S	S
8	R	A	C	C	O	O	N	S	E	G	O
9	I	T	O	D	A	Y	A	F	S	U	N
10	N	O	P	O	R	C	U	P	I	N	E

\_\_\_, \_\_\_ DEER  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ SQUIRRELS  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ RABBITS  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ GRASSHOPPER  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ MOLES

\_\_\_, \_\_\_ PORCUPINE  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ RACCOONS  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ SKUNKS  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ FOXES  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ SNAKE

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## Science

### Edible sorting and classifying activity

Gather together a cup of edible “sorting items.” For example:

- As many different kinds of M&Ms as you can find
- Chocolate & peanut butter chips
- Hershey kisses
- Peanuts or other type of nuts

Ask the child to sort the items into groups. There is no right and wrong, only what makes sense to the child. When finished, ask the child:

What criteria or attribute (color, size, ingredient, etc.) did you use to sort the items?

- Are there some items that fit more than one group or don't fit any group?
- Is it easy to sort or were there some items that were a little confusing?

If more than one person did this, did everyone sort by the same criteria? To really extend the learning, graph the attributes used to sort the items. *(blank graph below)*

### Sorting by attribute graph

Graph the attributes that children used to sort their items.  
What was the most common attribute (size, shape, color, etc.) used?

10					
9					
8					
7					
6					
5					
4					
3					
2					
1					
Attribute:					

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## Classifying animals

Animals can be sorted too. What are some attributes you might use to sort animals?

- By habitat
- Do they have a backbone?
- Do they have arms or legs?
- How many legs do they have?
- Do they have stripes or patterns on their bodies?
- Do they walk, swim, jump, or fly?

Some things are very easy for scientists to sort or classify, other things are not so easy. The first question they will ask is whether the item is (or was) alive or not. Both plants and animals are living things.

If the item in question is an animal, like the animals in the story, scientists will then ask other questions:

- Does it have hair or fur, feathers, or dry skin or scales?
- Does it breathe oxygen from air through lungs or water through gills?
- Are the babies born alive or from eggs?
- Does the baby eat milk from its mother?
- Is it warm or cold-blooded?
- How many body parts does the animal have?

By answering these (and other) questions, scientists can sort or classify the animals into “classes” such as mammal, bird, reptile, fish, amphibian, or insect.

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## Activity or sorting cards

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### Deer (Mammal)

The first time a deer has a fawn, she only gives birth to one. After that, she may have twins or triplets. Deer have an excellent sense of smell, good hearing and good eyesight.

This helps them avoid enemies such as wolves, lynx, coyotes,

bobcats, cougars, and humans.

They eat green plants, like water plants in the summer.

In the fall, they eat acorns, beechnuts, or other nuts, and corn.

In winter, they like the twigs and buds of birch and maple trees.

A group of deer is called a herd or a mob. A baby deer is called a fawn.

---



### Porcupines (Mammals)

Porcupines give birth to one to four pups.

The pups are born with soft quills which harden about an hour after birth.

In the spring, porcupines feed on leaves, twigs and green plants.

In winter, they chew through the bark of many trees to get to the layer of tissue inside. Porcupines love salt.

They will chew on any rusty tools or clothes they come across.

Animals that prey on porcupines are mountain lions, bobcats, wolves, and coyotes.

A group of porcupines is called a prickly. A baby porcupine is called a pup.

---





## Squirrels (Mammals)

Depending upon the species (type of), there are two to eight kits born in a litter.

As the pups grow, more room is needed in the nest. This may cause one or more babies to be accidentally pushed out of the nest.

Squirrels eat nuts, fruits, flowers, and plant buds. They occasionally eat bird eggs, and may even pounce on small birds.

Hawks and owls can catch and kill some squirrels. Tree snakes can take pups from their nest, but they can't really catch an adult squirrel when it's in a tree. The bobcat and fox will try to out-run a squirrel on the ground, but once it's in the tree, it is safe. The squirrel's biggest enemy is man.

A group of squirrels is called a dray or a scurry.

Baby squirrels are called pups or kittens.

Once the pups leave the nest they are called juveniles.

---



## Raccoons (Mammals)

Raccoons give birth to one to seven cubs with an average of four cubs per litter.

Raccoons have excellent hearing, sight and touch.

Their senses of taste and smell are not very good.

They are excellent climbers and can climb down a tree head first.

Raccoons eat fruits, acorns, nuts, grains, crayfish, insects, mice, young rabbits, birds, birds' eggs, turtles, fish, garbage and crops such as corn.

Their enemies are wild cats, wolves, coyotes, foxes, owls, and alligators.

Baby raccoons are called cubs, kits or pups. A group of raccoons is called a nursery or a gaze.

---



## Rabbits (Mammals)

A rabbit gives birth to three to seven litters in one year. Each litter has one to nine bunnies.

Rabbits "talk" to each other through smell and touch.

They thump their back legs on the ground to warn other rabbits that an enemy is near. Rabbit enemies are hawks, owls, foxes,

raccoons, skunks, opossums, & badgers.

They eat grass, clover, grains, leaves, tree bark and roots. They also like to eat lettuce, cabbage, and root vegetables (like potatoes).

A group of rabbits is called a nest, a warren, a colony, or a herd. Babies are called bunnies or kittens.



## Moles (Mammals)

Moles give birth to one to eight pups.

They eat earthworms, snails, ants, centipedes, millipedes, and occasionally seeds or vegetables.

They have bad eyesight, but can hear insects from a distance, and they have a good sense of smell.

When moles go above ground, they must watch out for owls and weasels, which are their enemies. Cats and dogs sometimes kill moles, but they rarely eat them.

A group of moles is called a labor. Baby moles are called pups.

---



## Skunks (Mammals)

An average litter size is from four to seven kits.

At birth, kits are almost blind and naked, but they have the beginning of their black and white markings.

They are usually born in the spring and stay with their mother all summer.

They are all grown up and go off on their own in the fall.

Enemies include Great Horned Owls, coyotes and domestic dogs.

Skunks eat grasshoppers, beetles, mice, spiders, snails, ants, wasps, crayfish and the eggs of some birds. They also like fruits and berries like cherries, raspberries, strawberries, apples and pears.

A group of skunks is called a surfeit. A baby skunk is called a kit.

---



## Snakes (Reptiles)

Depending on the species (type of snake), snakes may either give live birth or the babies may hatch out of eggs.

They give birth to anywhere from two to one hundred snakelets or hatchlings.

Snakes smell by flicking their tongues in and out. This helps them find food like mice, birds, lizards, frogs, opossums, pigs, or deer.

Enemies of snakes include many kinds of birds and mammals, crocodiles, turtles, and other snakes.

A group of snakes is called a pit, nest, knot, den, or bed. If the baby snakes are born alive, they are called snakelets. If they hatch out of eggs, they are called hatchlings.



## Foxes (Mammals)

The litter size of foxes can range from one to ten pups, but the average is three to six. Foxes eat rabbits, mice, eggs, birds, insects, frogs, lizards, fish, grass, berries, and nuts. Foxes are great tree-climbers. They climb to sun themselves or to escape enemies such as eagles, large owls, bobcats,

domestic dogs, coyotes, and humans.

Many foxes are also good swimmers and can run up to twenty miles per hour.

Baby foxes are called pups, or kits. A group of foxes is called a skulk, troop, or leash.

---



## Grasshoppers (Insects)

The female grasshopper lays between twenty to one hundred eggs which hatch into nymphs.

Nymphs look like little adults without wings.

Male grasshoppers make noise by rubbing their back legs

together.

Grasshoppers like to eat grass, but they will eat almost any kind of plants.

Enemies (predators) of the grasshopper include birds, beetles, mice, spiders, and several types of flies.

A group of grasshoppers is called a swarm or cloud. A baby grasshopper is called a nymph.

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## Animal card games

**Memory Card Game** Make two copies of each of the sorting card pages and cut out the cards. Mix them up and place them face down on a table. Taking turns, each player should turn over two cards so that everyone can see. If the cards match, he or she keeps the pair and takes another turn. If they do not match, the player should turn the cards back over and it is another player's turn. The player with the most pairs at the end of the game wins.

**Who Am I?** Copy or download the cards. Poke a hole through the card and tie onto a piece of yarn. Each child should put on a "card necklace" so that the card is on their back. Each child should ask "yes/no" questions to guess what animal they are.

**Go Fish** Make two copies of the cards to play "Go Fish." Deal four cards to two players or three cards to three or four players. Instead of asking for the animal by name, the child must ask for the card using some kind of animal description, such as "do you have an animal that slithers on the ground?" The other player verifies the animal with "do you want a snake?" before giving away the card. If the person does not have a match, they say "go fish" and the first child draws a card from the pile. A match is set down and the child continues with his/her turn until he/she has no more matches and the play goes to the next child. The first child to get rid of all his/her cards, wins.

## A day in the life of . . .

- Pick an animal from the book and pretend that you are that animal.
- Explain where you live (habitat).
- What do you eat?
- What animals might eat you?
- How do you protect yourself from those animals?
- Where do you sleep or rest?
- Write a paragraph about what do you do during the day (or night if nocturnal).

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## Science journal

Have children draw a picture to define the vocabulary word or concept

**Pup**

**Calves**

**fawn**

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**bunnies**

**hatchlings**

**nymphs**

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## Make a Nature Scrapbook

You will need:

2 white or brown lunch bags

Stapler and staples

Colored pencils or crayons, pen

Glue – if desired

Directions: Place the bags together with the openings on your right. Fold together and staple in the middle so that you now have a “book” of eight made from your bags. The “pockets” are at the end.

Go outside in your own backyard or find a special “nature spot.” Following the suggested guidelines, color or describe in sentences what you see or feel.

Page 1 (Cover)      Look around you and describe or draw what you see.

Page 2 Get down on the ground and look at something very closely. Now what do you see?

Page 3 Close your eyes. Can you smell anything? Describe or color what you think makes the smell. Are there some times that you can “smell nature” better than others?

Page 4 Pretend you are an animal in your own backyard or nature spot. Write or draw a picture to describe or show what your backyard or nature spot looks like to that animal.

Page 5 Younger children: Draw a picture of the animal from page 4. Older children: Make up a riddle or a hint about your animal and have other people guess what it is.

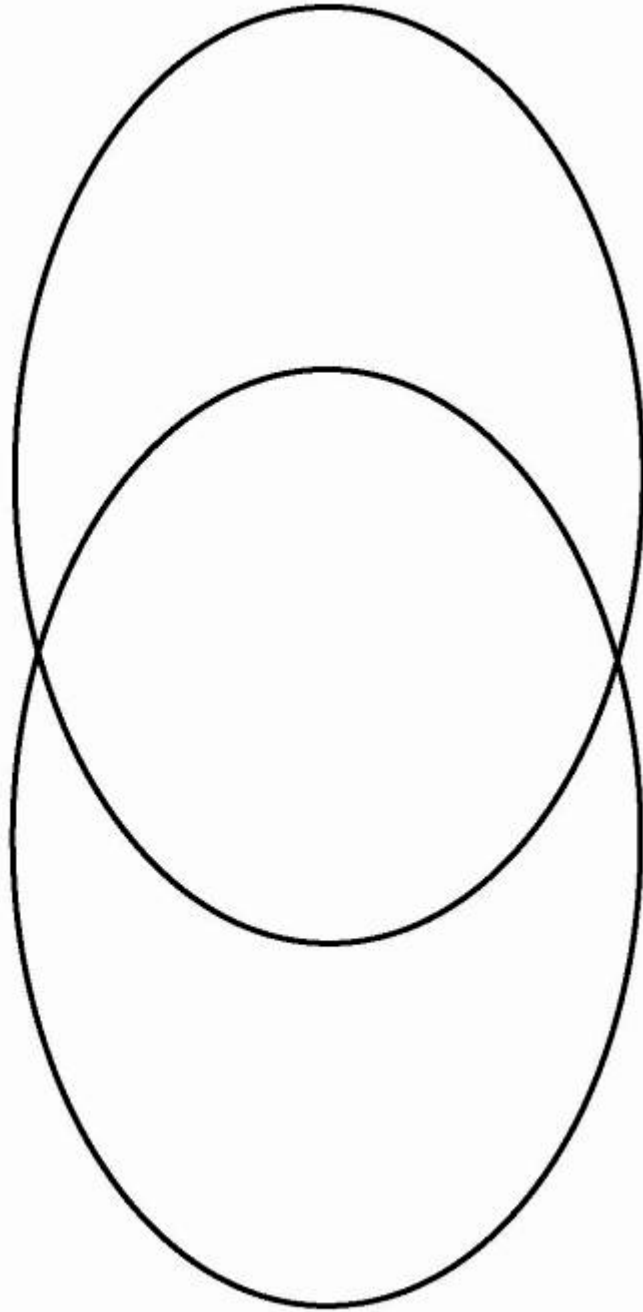
Page 6 Pick up or touch things in your backyard or nature area: feathers, pinecones, grass, flowers, etc. Draw a picture of one or two items or describe them. Put your “treasures” in the pocket but make sure that your “treasures” are not alive.

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## Venn diagram

### **Two Animal Comparison**

Pick any two animals and compare and contrast them.



Common

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## Math

Sort the cards from the science section and then graph (older children) by whether they eat plants, animals, or both and by animal class (mammal, bird, reptiles, etc). Which has the most or which has the least?

### Sorting & Classification Graph

10									
9									
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
	<u>plants</u>	<u>meat</u>	<u>both</u>	<u>plants</u>	<u>meat</u>	<u>both</u>	<u>plants</u>	<u>meat</u>	<u>both</u>
	<u>Mammals</u>			<u>Reptiles</u>			<u>Insects</u>		

- How many animals have the same baby name?
- How many animals have the same group name?
- *In My Backyard* counts animals from one to ten. Find out the average number of babies each animal give birth to. (HINT: Each animal is able to give birth to at least the number of babies on its page).
- Create a number chart/graph. What animals give birth to only one baby? Two babies? etc.
- Many animals in the book do not come out at the same time of day.
- Divide a pie chart into sections that include different times of day (dawn, dusk, mid-day, evening, etc.). In what section does each animal belong? Compare and contrast the chart upon completion.
- Measure and compare tail lengths.
- Compare footprint sizes.
- Use items from each animal as manipulatives (i.e.: acorn math for squirrels).
- Use animal cracker for sorting, patterns, etc.
- Compare baby animal weights (research). Which is more, less, equal?

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## Research and geography



Range of common raccoon (Wikipedia)



Range of red fox (Wikipedia)



Range of white-tailed deer (Smithsonian)

- Which of these animals lives in your area?
- Which of the three animals lives outside of North America?
- Which of the three animals lives further north?
- Which lives furthest to the south?

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## Other

### Art Projects

- Make a diorama of your backyard. What animals will you include? What does the habitat look like?
- Make animal masks.
- Using partial photos of animals (for example: a close up of rabbit's foot). Guess what animal this is.
- Find photographs of each animal. Make puzzles out of each.
- Make a mural of each animal's habitat. What would you find in each?

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