

Animals Among Us

What Is This Activity?

How well do wild animals in a city or town get along with people? Families test and compare how close they can get to pigeons, sparrows, seagulls, squirrels, chipmunks, lizards, and other city critters.

Learning Goals

Big Science Idea:

- City animals learn to live with people by hiding, by fleeing from them, or by getting used to being around them.

Skills kids will use to investigate it:

- Model predator-prey behavior
- Observe, test, measure, document, and compare the flee distances of city animals
- Communicate results and explain why some city animals are less afraid of people than others

How Do You Get Ready?

- Read the activity and gather the materials.
- Scout out a place that's popular with city animals—where people eat and throw away food or where there's fresh water, for example. It could be a park, square, fountain, outdoor market, or other large area. If you can, hold this activity at a time when the location isn't too crowded.
- Troubleshoot safety concerns (traffic, poison ivy, sharp objects, etc.).
- Choose landmarks to mark the boundaries of a playing area on grass for the warm-up game. It should be just large enough for the whole group to run around.
- Print one copy of the "Flee Distance" handout for each family.
- Look through all the "Animal Fact Cards" and print and cut out all animals that are present in your region.



pbskids.org/plumlanding/parents

Curriculum Topics

predator-prey, human impact, animal adaptation

Activity Type

outdoors (preferably in dry weather, warm or cold days)

Group Size

whole group, small groups

Activity Time

40–60 minutes

Materials

- "Animal Fact Cards"
- "Flee Distance" handout (one per family)
- Pencil or pen (one per family)
- Optional: Families might want to bring their video or phone cameras
- Optional: "Explore Animals Around You" handout

Next Generation Science Standards

Disciplinary Core Ideas

LS1.A: Structure and Function

LS4.C: Adaptation

LS4.D: Biodiversity and Humans

Science and Engineering Practices

Asking Questions and Defining Problems

Planning and Carrying Out Investigations

Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Crosscutting Concepts

Cause and Effect: Mechanism and Prediction

Warm-up (5-10 minutes)

(Science Skills: Model predator-prey behavior)

Flee the Coyote!

1. **Ask an older child or adult to play the first “Coyote,”** a predator who stands in the center of the marked play area. Tell the rest of the kids and adults that they are “Rabbits” (prey animals).
2. **On your signal, the Coyote “hunts” (tags) Rabbits,** who flee in all directions. Anyone who is tagged becomes a Coyote and also tries to tag Rabbits.
3. **Any player who steps out of bounds** becomes a Coyote.
4. **The last Rabbit standing is the winner**—and the first Coyote in the next game. Briefly discuss strategies for Coyotes and Rabbits. For example, Rabbits start with safety in numbers; if they flee in all directions, the Coyote can only pursue one of them at a time.

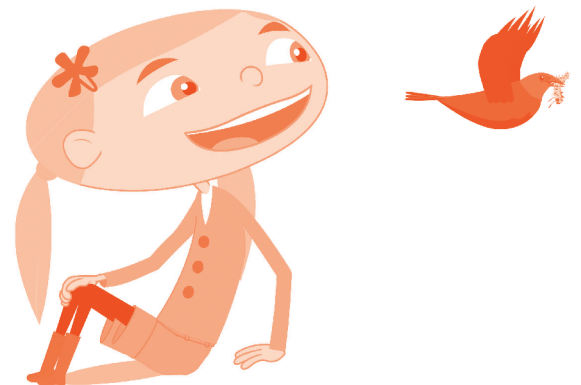
Activity

(Science Skills: Observe, test, measure, document, and compare the flee distances of city animals)

Animals Among Us (40 minutes)

1. **Introduce families to the phrase “flee distance,”** also called fright distance.
2. **Ask families to share their close encounters with animals:** In the city, in a suburb, or in nature.
3. **Ask:** *What animals live in our city or town?* Show and briefly discuss the “Animal Fact Cards,” which have examples of city animals beyond the very common squirrels, pigeons, sparrows, and so on. For low-level readers, ask for kid volunteers to read a few of the cards aloud.
4. **Point out the boundaries for the activity and explain that families are going to test and compare the flee distances of city animals**—without touching, terrifying, or harming them in any way.
5. Toward that end, **have everyone practice “Ninja Walking”**—walking as quietly as they can (including you!). Tips: Breathe quietly through the nose and avoid sticks, pinecones, and other crunchy objects.
6. **Encourage families to have fun and experiment with different styles of walking.** Demonstrate a few examples for them:
 - Stand tall or crouch low?
 - Walk heel-to-toe, flat-footed, or tiptoe? (Try this: Place the heel first and slowly roll forward on the outside of the foot to the toes.)
 - Take big steps or little ones?
 - Does walking very *loudly* tell you what not to do?

Flee distance is how close an animal will let a predator (hunter) get before running, hopping, or flying away.



7. Pass out the “Flee Distance” handout and review the directions with families. They can use the back of the handout to record results. Give each adult a pen or pencil and tell families to quietly spread out and look for city animals. Move from family to family (quietly, to avoid scaring off animals) and offer support and encouragement.

Wrap-up (10 minutes)

(Science Skills: Communicate results and explain why some city animals are less afraid of people than others)

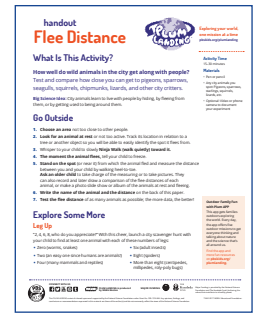
- **Freeze Frame:** Gather the group and ask everyone to freeze in place. How close are people standing to their family members? To strangers? Ask everyone to move in closer. Anyone feel uneasy? **Ask:** *Do people have a “flee distance,” like the animals you just observed?*
- **Invite families to share their data:** The animal names and flee distances and any observations they made. *Which animals let people get closest? Which ones were the most skittish or jumpy? Did any animals freeze in place?* (Many predators react to prey in motion, and so staying motionless is a defense against predators.) *Did animals come toward you? If so, why?* (Perhaps looking for food.)
- **Discuss:** *Why are some city animals less afraid of people than others?* (Animals become bolder when people feed them—by hand or through garbage. Hunted animals are usually more fearful than hunters. Wild birds are very timid, but many city birds become used to being with people and do not flee as quickly.)
- **Encourage families to take home the “Flee Distance” handout** to repeat the activity in their neighborhoods and point out the related “Explore Some More” activities. If you wish, **give them the “Explore Animals Around You” handout** to provide them with more ideas on how to continue investigating animals together.

Explore Some More

Squirrel Mapper

Ask families if anyone has ever seen a black squirrel. If so, encourage them to report it on the Squirrel Mapper site! Why? Scientists think most squirrels were black 150 years ago. Yet today the black squirrel is very rare. Today’s squirrels are mostly gray and brown. By tracking black squirrels across the country, scientists hope to figure out the cause of the color change.

VISIT pbskids.org/plumlanding/parents to find more activities, games, and videos.



CONNECT WITH US



PLUM LANDING is produced by WGBH Boston

MAJOR FUNDING



Major Funding is provided by the National Science Foundation and The Kendeda Fund; furthering the values that contribute to a healthy planet

handout

Flee Distance



Exploring your world,
one mission at a time
pbskids.org/plumlanding

What Is This Activity?

How well do wild animals in the city get along with people?

Test and compare how close you can get to pigeons, sparrows, seagulls, squirrels, chipmunks, lizards, and other city critters.

Big Science Idea: City animals learn to live with people by hiding, by fleeing from them, or by getting used to being around them.



Activity Time

15–30 minutes

Materials

- Pen or pencil
- Any city animals you spot: Pigeons, sparrows, starlings, squirrels, lizards, etc.
- Optional: Video or phone camera to document your experiment

Go Outside

1. **Choose an area** not too close to other people.
2. **Look for an animal at rest** or not too active. Track its location in relation to a tree or another object so you will be able to easily identify the spot it flees from.
3. Whisper to your child to slowly **Ninja Walk (walk quietly) toward it.**
4. **The moment the animal flees,** tell your child to freeze.
5. **Stand on the spot** (or near it) from which the animal fled and measure the distance between you and your child by walking heel-to-toe.
Ask an older child to take charge of the measuring or to take pictures. They can also record and later draw a comparison of the flee distances of each animal, or make a photo slide show or album of the animals at rest and fleeing.
6. **Write the name of the animal and the distance** on the back of this paper.
7. **Test the flee distance** of as many animals as possible; the more data, the better!

Explore Some More

Leg Up

“2, 4, 6, 8, who do you appreciate?” With this cheer, launch a city scavenger hunt with your child to find at least one animal with each of these numbers of legs:

- Zero (worms, snakes)
- Two (an easy one since humans are animals!)
- Four (many mammals and reptiles)
- Six (adult insects)
- Eight (spiders)
- More than eight (centipedes, millipedes, roly-poly bugs)

Outdoor Family Fun with Plum APP

This app gets families outdoors exploring the world. Every day, the app offers five outdoor missions to get everyone thinking and talking about nature and the science that’s all around us.

Find the app and more fun resources on pbskids.org/plumlanding.



CONNECT WITH US



PLUM LANDING is produced by WGBH Boston

MAJOR FUNDING



THE Kendeda FUND

Major Funding is provided by the National Science Foundation and The Kendeda Fund: furthering the values that contribute to a healthy planet

This PLUM LANDING material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. DRL-1516466. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

TM/© 2017 WGBH Educational Foundation.

hoja para repartir

Distancia de huida



Exploramos tu mundo,
una misión a la vez
pbskids.org/plumlanding

¿De qué trata esta actividad?

¿Qué tan bien se llevan los animales salvajes en la ciudad con las personas? Observen y comparen qué tanto se pueden acercar a palomas, gorriones, gaviotas, ardillas, lagartijas y otros animales que viven en la ciudad.

Megaconcepto científico: Los animales urbanos (que viven en la ciudad) aprenden a convivir con las personas, ya sea ocultándose o huyendo, y acostumbrándose a estar cerca unos de los otros.



Duración de la actividad

15 a 30 minutos

Materiales

- Lápiz o bolígrafo
- Cualquier animal de la ciudad que veas: paloma, gorrion, estornino, ardilla, lagartija, etc.
- Opcional: Usar su teléfono para documentar el experimento con fotos o vídeo.

Salgamos al aire libre

1. **Escoja un espacio** que no esté demasiado cerca de otras personas.
2. **Busque un animal en reposo** o que no esté muy activo. Defina su ubicación en relación con un árbol u otro objeto para que sea fácil de identificar el sitio desde donde huyó.
3. Susúrrele al niño que **se acerque caminando lentamente y como Ninja (muy pacito)**.
4. **El instante que el animal huya**, dígame al niño que permanezca quieto, como congelado.
5. **Párese en el sitio** (o cerca) desde el que huyó el animal y mida la distancia desde ese sitio hasta el niño. Mida la distancia caminando tocando el talón de un pie contra los dedos del otro pie.
Pídale a un niño mayor que se encargue de medir o de tomar fotos. También puede anotar y luego comparar las diferencias en la distancia de huida de cada animal, o puede hacer una función o un álbum de imágenes de los animales en reposo y huyendo.
6. Al dorso de esta hoja, **anote el nombre del animal y la distancia**.
7. **Mida la distancia de huida** de cuántos animales sea posible. Cuántos más datos, ¡mejor!

Diversiones familiares al aire libre con el app de Plum

Este app invita a las familias a salir al aire libre a explorar el mundo. Cada día, el app ofrece cinco misiones al aire libre que ponen a todos a pensar sobre la naturaleza y las ciencias que tenemos a nuestro alrededor. Disponible en inglés solamente.

Encuentren el app y más recursos divertidos en:
pbskids.org/plum.

Exploremos más

Patoneando

"2, 4, 6, 8 patas, para hacer más caminatas". Con este refrán, jueguen a recorrer la ciudad para encontrar al menos un animal con cada uno de estos números de patas o piernas:

- Cero (lombrices, culebras)
- Dos (es fácil, los seres humanos somos animales)
- Cuatro (muchos mamíferos y reptiles)
cochinillas)
- Seis (insectos adultos)
- Ocho (arañas)
- Más de ocho (ciempies, milpiés,



CONÉCTATE CON NOSOTROS



PLUM LANDING es una
producción de WGBH Boston

CON AUSPICIO
CLAVE DE



Auspicio clave de la National Science Foundation
y el Kendeda Fund: promovemos los valores que
aportan a tener un planeta saludable.