

Leaps and Bounds

Grade Levels: K-3

In a Nutshell

Students focus on animal movements by investigating tracks and other signs and by mimicking animal movements with their bodies.

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Use identification guides to match tracks with the animal who made them;
- List 3 animal signs that they discovered along the trail;
- Name 3 survival skills an animal's movements help it accomplish (i.e. find food, escape from predators, attract a mate, etc.);
- Imitate the movements of at least 2 animals (gallop like a mouse, amble like a raccoon, walk on their toes like a fox or deer) according to their track patterns.

Leaps and Bounds Pre-visit Activities

The following materials are aids to help prepare your students for their visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. The vocabulary list contains terms and concepts your students will encounter in their visit. Please modify the definitions as needed. The activities listed below are merely options—it is not necessary to do them all or to follow any particular order. Keep in mind that your students' learning experiences at CWES will be enhanced if they are familiar with these concepts and terms prior to the on-site activities.

Activity #1

Brainstorm the ways that many people might move their bodies in their lives. For example, we might walk, tiptoe, sneak, run, swim, dance, lay down, or skip. Play charades and try to guess which movement is being acted out. Discuss ways that different movements may be useful for different purposes in our lives. For example, how effective would it be to dance while you sleep? To tiptoe to the bus stop when you are late for school?

Activity #2

Following the brainstorm in Activity #1 above, try to find examples (pictures, if possible) of animals in the natural world that move in those same kinds of way. Are fish the only animals that swim? Can cows “sneak up” on something? Break the class into groups and assign each group a motion (i.e. swim, hop, soar, sneak, etc.) Have the students in each group draw pictures or cut out pictures from magazines to show their motion. Then put them together into collages that demonstrate their examples.

Activity #3

Think through and act out what you suppose a typical day of a common animal might be like. For example, a squirrel might wake up in its nest hole, climb down the tree (don't forget to stretch as they often do!), and bound around the yard to locate a nut it has buried before. Then, it might sit and eat the nut and... Reinforce the idea that animals use a variety of movements to make it through any given day. What kind of effect do the students think it would have on the life of a squirrel if it couldn't use one of its front paws? Explore other possible disabilities for the squirrel. What about humans?

Leaps and Bounds Post-visit Activities

A visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station can be a school-year highlight for both students and their educators. We feel the knowledge and concepts gained during a Station visit apply outside the Station as well. The following activities will allow students to expand their knowledge and help them incorporate those lessons into their everyday lives. Feel free to pick from and modify the activities as best suits your group.

Activity #1

Have the students “try on” a variety of misfit movements for wild animals to imagine how these movements might affect the ability of the animal to survive in their natural home. For example, have students imitate the natural movements of deer. Act out a typical day for the deer (see pre-visit activity #2). Then, imagine that the deer hopped like a rabbit instead. Now, try on the misfit movement and see how the deer’s life might be affected. Would the deer last long in the wild with this different ability to move?

Activity #2

Show pictures of animals that share common movements. For example, both a snake and an earthworm wiggle their bodies along in similar ways. Or, both a grasshopper and a rabbit hop. Compare pictures of these two creatures and look for things that both animals have in common on their bodies, which might help them move as they do.

Activity #3

Find an area where there is open soil in which to make footprints (or body prints). Or, create your own place by sprinkling a light layer of soil or sawdust over the ground. Then, have the class turn their backs while one student moves across the “print area.” Next, have the rest of the class turn around and guess from the prints how the student moved across that area. Encourage the use of hands and feet (and even whole body!) to make reading the prints an even greater challenge for the rest of the class! Rake over the prints and try it again! Relate this activity to reading real wild animals tracks by looking in nature field guides and other resources to compare what an animal’s tracks look like with how the animal moves.

Leaps and Bounds Resources

Teacher Resources

Friend, Mari. 1992. *Discovering Nature's Secrets*. New York: Universe.

Parella, Deborah. 1995. *Shelburne Farms Project Seasons*. Shelburne, VT: Shelburne Farms.

Pearce, Q.L. and W.J. 1990. *Nature's Footprints in the Forest*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Silver Press.

Children's Literature

Bowen, Betsy. 1993. *Tracks in the Wild*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Dendy, Leslie. 1995. *Tracks, Scats, and Signs*. Minocqua, WI: North Word Press Inc. 48pp.

Share, Marjorie, L. 1995. *Animal Tracks*. Washington, D.C.: National Wildlife Federation. 80pp.