Environmental Education Activity

Searching for Shadows

Age/Grade Range

- Ages: 9-13

Group Size

- Large group activity (10-30 students)

Time

- Prep time: 30 minutes
- Set-up: 5-10 minutes
- Activity: 1 hr

Materials

- Library books on lynx and wolverine
- Lynx or wolverine pelt (optional)
- Notebooks (optional)

NWT SCIENCE FOCUS

Topics

- Ecology and Animals

Objective

- Learn about some less well known mammals, lynx and wolverine.
- Build rudimentary research skills.
- Look outside for animal signs.

Set-Up

1. You'll need a forest trail to hike on, and safe transportation to and from the trail if it is not within walking distance.
2. Take out some books from the library on lynx and wolverine, some suggestions below (lots of pictures are great).
3. Print out questions that the kids can search for using the books you provide them.

Modification

Give the kids notebooks on the hike and have them write down what they see, animals, weird plants, weather; they can also draw pictures if they want. Then after they can share the coolest thing they saw. Repeating the activity several times throughout the year, they will be able to compare what they see at different times of the year.

ECOLOGY NORTH

What-you Know Quiz (15min)

This is a nice little warm-up exercise before you go on the hike. Get books from the library on lynx and wolverine and animal tracking. Set them around the room with a question associated with each one. As kids come in, they can try and find the answers.
Example Books and Questions:

1. Lynx NWT Wildlife Sketches: Draw a lynx' distinctive features – what is special about a lynx ears, tail, paws and face? [tufted, short black tip, like a snowshoe, round and long whiskers]
2. Wolverine NWT Wildlife Sketches: What to wolverines eat? What's something special about how they store their food? [scavengers, eat everything – they stash their food in a food cache]
3. All About Canadian Animals Lynxes: How many snowshoe hare can a lynx eat in one year? [150 – 200] What animals eat lynx? [wolves, wolverines, cougars]
4. Animal Scavengers Wolverines: What colour are wolverine kits when they are born? What do they look like when they are eight weeks old? [white, open eyes and turn black with stripes]
5. Backyard Animals Lynx: Why was the constellation that Hevelius discovered called 'the lynx'? [because you would have to have the eyesight of a lynx to see it without a telescope]
6. Welcome to the World of Wolverines: What is a nickname for wolverines (hint, it has 'bear' in it and a funny word)? Why are they called this? [Skunk Bear, leave scents as messages]
7. Tracking and Reading Sign: What do you call lynx poop? What would it look like, and what would you find inside? [scat, wrapped in rabbit hair around an inner core of small bones] What other tracks and signs of animals should we look for on the trail?
8. Scats and Tracks of North America: What's the scientific name of a wolverine? Draw wolverine tracks.
9. A Field Guide to Animal Tracks: Draw a lynx footprint. Draw what a lynx track would look like in the snow. How is a lynx track different compared to other cats' tracks (like jaguars and house cats)?

Show and Tell: (15min)

Review questions and answers. Show pelts if you have them and pass them around. Make sure everyone has the chance to see a picture of a lynx and a wolverine. It's unlikely that you will see an actual lynx or wolverine on your hike, so talk about what we should be looking for on the trail, about the signs these animals leave.

Go out for a hike (1 hour)

Look for signs of animals. Lynx and wolverine especially, but point out anything interesting you see. Turn around after ½ hour.

Questions/Points of Discussion

1. If you didn't see any animals, does that mean they aren't there?
2. How do you think scientists keep track of animals that are hard to find, like lynx and wolverine? (scat surveys, traditional knowledge, barb wire baited posts to catch their fur, etc.)