



# Wildlife Lifecycles

## 3-5th

Themes: Lifecycles, Baby Animals

### Location:

This lesson's activities can be done in the classroom with student computers.

**Remote learning modification:** Lesson can be taught over Zoom or Google Classrooms, the outdoor part can be done in the students' yard, local park, or nearby greenspace with an adult.

This lesson is better taught in the spring, early summer, or early fall when weather is better and students are more likely to see different life stages of animals.

### Standards:

#### NGSS

##### [3-LS1-1](#)

Develop models to describe that organisms have unique and diverse life cycles but all have in common birth, growth, reproduction, and death.

#### Common Core

##### [ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7](#)

Use information gained from illustrations and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., when, where, why, and how key events occur).

##### [ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2](#)

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

### Modifications, Adaptations:

For COVID-19 distance learning, or other remote learning modification, look for **remote learning modifications** throughout the lesson plan.

### Materials:

Baby Animals PowerPoint, Life Cycle Graphic Organizer, notebook/science journal, pencil, colored pencils/crayons, optional: field guides of insects/animals/plants, hand lenses, Play-Doh, clay

### Vocabulary:

**Camouflage:** Coloring or marking on an animal's body that helps the animal blend in with its environment, making it difficult to be seen by potential predators or prey.

**Hypothesize:** To suggest an explanation for why something happens based on information you already know.

**Juvenile:** An animal who has not yet reached adulthood.

**Life cycle:** A series of changes that happen to all living things (organisms). Life cycles include development, birth, growth, adulthood, and death.

**Metamorphosis:** A series of dramatic changes in an animal's body shape and structure as it develops after hatching or being born.

**Orphan:** A young animal whose natural parents are known to be dead and is too young to survive on its own.

### Objectives:

Students will..

1. Describe the four stages of a life cycle using a graphic organizer.
2. Analyze similarities and differences between adult and baby animals by looking at pictures and describing physical features.
3. Observe an animal in an outdoor space and hypothesize about what life stage they think the animal is in.
4. Create an illustrated or 3D model of their chosen animal's life cycle.

### Procedure:

#### Life Cycles

Have students open the "Baby Animals" PowerPoint. This PowerPoint has five pictures of baby animals and their parents. As students look at the pictures, ask them to answer the following questions at the end of the PowerPoint:

- 1) Describe differences you notice between babies and their parents.
- 2) Describe similarities you notice between babies and their parents.
- 3) Do you notice anything similar with the different baby animals?
- 4) Do you think all baby animals stay with their parents? Why or why not?
- 5) What's another baby animal that looks different from its parents?

Give students 5-10 minutes to complete. Afterward, review student answers as a class. Explain to students that today they will be learning about life cycles of animals. Ask the class if they know what the term "life cycle" means.

Afterward, pass out the life cycle diagram and [watch this three-minute](#) video explaining life cycles. As students watch the video, have them fill in the four phases of the life cycle. **Remote learning modifications:** The document is a fillable PDF and students can fill it out online or over Google Slides. The four phases of the life cycle are: Egg/seed, birth, growth, adulthood. After the video, ask students to tell you the four parts. Have them think-pair-share with a partner why some species have "simple" life cycles and other species have more complicated life cycles.

Afterward, have students pair with a partner and pass out either the frog or butterfly life cycle cards. Ask students to work together to put the cards in order from egg to adult. Give students 5-7 minutes and then have students leave the cards on their tables and walk around the room to see if their arrangement was similar to others. **Remote learning modification:** Have students put cards in order by themselves on a slideshow and then turn it in. Review the correct order of both life cycles, having students give you the answers as you display them on a whiteboard, or **remote learning modification:** a slideshow.



## Looking for life cycles

Take students to your schoolyard or nearby park. Give students a notebook (science journal/nature notebook) or plain sheet of paper. You may choose to pass out colored pencils to students who wish to draw instead of write. Spend about 20 minutes outdoors and ask students to observe animals and record their observations in their journal. Remember, insects are animals too! Questions to consider include:

- What did the animal look like? (e.g. Describe its color, shape, legs, arms, wings, feathers, fur, scales, etc.).
- What was the animal doing? Why do you think it was doing this?
- Was the animal eating? If so, what?
- Hypothesize what life cycle stage the animal was in (egg/birth/growth/adult) and support your answer in your journal.

If students struggle to find any animal, you can have them observe a plant and explain if they think the plant life cycle is similar to an animal and why/why not.

The next part can be done inside or outside. Arrange students into groups of 3-5 and have them share their observations. After sharing with the small group, they can choose one person to share their observations with the class.

**Remote learning modification:** Have students go outside and complete the same observations with an adult as part of their homework. On your next online class, put students into breakout rooms for small-group discussion and have one student from each group share with the class when you come back together.

## What about orphaned baby animals?

Ask students if they've ever come upon a baby animal. If anyone has, ask them to describe the experience. Ask them what lifecycle stage a baby animal is in (growth). After students have shared their experiences, ask students to close their eyes and imagine: You are suddenly taken from your family by a strange alien species. The alien family gives you the wrong food to eat (like rocks and banana peels) and you're always afraid they might try and eat you! You feel sick, weak, and scared living with this new alien family and you wish you had your own family back...

Have students open their eyes and tell them this may be how baby wildlife feels when they are "rescued" by humans. Just like you, the best thing for wildlife is to have their own families raise them. Without their wild parents, they may never make it to the adult stage of their life cycle.

So, what should we do when we find baby wildlife? As a class, read the short WDFW blog, "[Spring Babies](#)". Have students popcorn read through the blog. After you've finished, ask students what an orphaned animal is and what they should do if they come upon a wildlife baby. If they think the animal is really orphaned, what should they do?

Next, choose one, (or all) of these videos about what to do when you find baby wildlife. [Rabbits](#), [birds](#), and [fawns](#).

## Modeling a life cycle:


Ask students to recall the four parts of a life cycle. Write these four parts on the board or virtual whiteboard. For their

next assignment, students will model the full life cycle of the animal they observed in the field. They don't need to know the specific species name. For example, they can model an ant without knowing the species of ant. If students don't want to model the species they observed, they can choose from the following list: crow, frog, salamander, raccoon, skunk, robin, deer, moth, or dragonfly.

Students will have to do research on their own to come up with the full life cycle of their species. Their model should show what the animal looks like at each individual stage and they should write a one-page report answering the following questions:

- What is the animal?
- Describe how the animal changes at each life stage.
- How is the animal born? Do they live in a nest or den?
- Does the parent stay nearby and raise them or leave them completely?
- Do the parents look similar to their babies or different?
- Does the species go through metamorphosis?
- Describe how the animal has a similar life cycle to other animals that share its habitat.
- Describe how the animal has a different life cycle to other animals that share its habitat.
  - o (e.g., a frog and a fish live in a similar habitat, how are their life cycles similar? How are they different?)
- Describe what to do when a person stumbles upon a baby/juvenile of the animal.

Students can draw their model, form it with clay/Play-Doh, or create a short skit with costumes and props that help tell the story of the animal's life cycle. When students have completed their projects, we recommend having a "galley walk" (you could invite family members) where students can show off their work (save time for performances).

 **Idea:** Show off your students' work! Share student projects from this lesson with WDFW.  
Facebook: @WashingtonFishWildlife  
Instagram: @TheWDFW  
Twitter: @WDFW  
#WildWashington #WildWa

**Did you teach this lesson? [Give us your feedback.](#)**

## Additional Resources :

*We encourage you to use the following resources as either a supplement to this lesson, or to share the resources with students for their project.*

## Supplemental activities:

- [Washington Wildlife parent/baby match game](#)-WDFW
- [Baby Wildlife and Lifecycles](#)-WDFW
- [Keep Wildlife Wild](#)-Wisconsin DNR
- [Wildlife Encounters](#)- University of Illinois
- [Nature's Nursery](#)- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- [Cycling Through Lifecycles](#)- ArtsNow

## Other resources:

- [Injured or orphaned wildlife](#)-WDFW
- [Metamorphosis: Change of Plans \(video\)](#)-PBS
- ["Orphaned" Wild Animals?](#)- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- [Leave Wild Animals in the Wild](#)- Environmental Education for Kids