

## Schoolyard Habitat



### Schoolyards as habitat?

Absolutely! Many schoolyards have grassy areas and trees. Some schoolyards even have gardens. Whenever the essential items that make up a habitat are provided, wildlife will appear. What are the essentials? Water, food, and shelter.

### Lions, Tigers, Bears?

Chances are that you won't find any of the larger animals at your school because there just isn't enough space, food, or water to support them. However, if you look under a rock you are likely to find insects, spiders, worms, snails, and maybe even a salamander. A view above into the sky might reveal a hawk, dove, or sparrow.

### Signs of Life?

Sometimes all you'll get is a sign that an animal has been in your schoolyard while you were at home. Oftentimes you find dog, rabbit, deer, and mouse "scat" (that's what scientists call animal poop) scattered throughout the yard. Take a closer look at the ground when it is muddy or snowy to find animal tracks. Examine the trees in your schoolyard to find nests, woodpecker holes, and feathers. You may even find the holes of burrowing animals like mice, squirrels, and snakes in the fields. No matter where you look, we are sharing space with wildlife. Be sure to pick up your trash, leave growing things to grow, and be kind to all the wild things you find in your "schoolyard habitat."

Schoolyard Habitat Flashcards

House Cat



Nuttall's Cottontail



Fox Squirrel



Red-tailed Hawk



American Robin



American Crow



Mourning Dove



House Sparrow



Tiger Swallowtail



Crab Spiders



Ants



Boxelder Bug



Boxelder



Colorado Blue Spruce



Common Dandelion



Kentucky Bluegrass



The Sun



House Cat

Name: House Cat  
Scientific Name: *Felis catus*  
Predators: Raptors, dogs, fox  
Prey or Food: Rodents, birds

Did you know? Scientists believe that cats are responsible for over 3 billion bird deaths each year

Nuttall's Cottontail

Name: Nuttall's Cottontail  
Scientific Name: *Sylvilagus nuttallii*  
Predators: Carnivorous mammals, raptors, snakes  
Prey or Food: Grasses, flowers, sagebrush

Did you know? Look for these rabbits in the morning and evening when they come out of hiding to forage.

Fox Squirrel

Name: Fox Squirrel  
Scientific Name: *Sciurus niger*  
Predators: Crows, raptors, cats, dogs  
Prey or Food: seeds, berries, mushrooms, eggs

Did you know? A "squirrel drey" is a nest made in tree branches with leaves, sticks, or mistletoe.

Red-tailed Hawk

Name: Red-tailed Hawk  
Scientific Name: *Buteo jamaicensis*  
Predators: Eagles  
Prey or Food: Rodents, birds, snakes

Did you know? Other raptors have red tails, but these hawks also have a dark band across their chest.

American Robin

Name: American Robin  
Scientific Name: *Turdus migratorius*  
Predators: Raptors, cats, pesticides and herbicides  
Prey or Food: Worms, insects, fruit

Did you know? A robin's song sounds like "cheerily, cheer up, cheer up, cheerily, cheer up."

American Crow

Name: American Crow  
Scientific Name: *Corvus brachyrhynchos*  
Predators: Raptors  
Prey or Food: Seeds, fruit, insects, carrion, eggs, garbage

Did you know? Crows sometimes make and use tools.

Mourning Dove

Name: Mourning Dove  
Scientific Name: *Zenaida macroura*  
Predators: Humans, cats, dogs, raptors  
Prey or Food: Seeds

Did you know? With a population of an estimated 350 billion, mourning doves are one of the most widespread and abundant birds in the US.

House Sparrow

Name: House Sparrow  
Scientific Name: *Passer domesticus*  
Predators: Cats, raptors  
Prey or Food: Seeds, insects, garbage

Did you know? This bird was introduced from Europe and quickly invaded the whole country, preferring to live near human populations.

Tiger Swallowtail

Name: Tiger Swallowtail  
Scientific Name: *Papilio rutulus*  
Predators: Birds, reptiles, amphibians, other insects, spiders  
Prey or Food: Nectar

Did you know? As a defense, this butterfly mimics the colors of another butterfly that is poisonous. The caterpillar can emit a foul smell.

Crab Spiders

Name: Crab Spiders  
Scientific Name: *Thomisidae* spp.  
Predators: Birds, other spiders  
Prey or Food: Bees, flies, butterflies

Did you know? Crab spiders are capable of camouflage, changing color to match the color of the flowers they visit.

Ants

Name: Ants  
Scientific Name: *Formicidae* Family  
Predators: Birds, rodents, larger insects  
Prey or Food: Other ants and insects, decaying matter, fungus

Did you know? A fossil of an ant as large as a hummingbird was found in Wyoming in 2011.

Boxelder Bug

Name: Boxelder Bug  
Scientific Name: *Boisea trivittata*  
Predators: Birds, rodents, other insects, spiders  
Prey or Food: Boxelder seeds, other seeds

Did you know? These bugs seek out warm buildings for shelter in colder months.

Boxelder

Name: Boxelder  
Scientific Name: *Acer negundo*  
Predators: Insects, birds, small rodents (seeds)  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? Boxelders have a double winged fruit (seed) called a samara.

Colorado Blue Spruce

Name: Colorado Blue Spruce  
Scientific Name: *Picea pungens*  
Predators: Insects, birds, small rodents (seeds)  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? These trees are often used in "living fences" to protect buildings and roads from wind and snow.

Common Dandelion

Name: Common Dandelion  
Scientific Name: *Taraxacum officinale*  
Predators: Insects, birds, small rodents (seeds)  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? A fun experiment is to choose a dandelion in the spring and measure it daily to see how fast it grows.

Kentucky Bluegrass

Name: Kentucky Bluegrass  
Scientific Name: *Poa pratensis*  
Predators: Insects, birds, small rodents (seeds), bees, birds, butterflies (pollen)  
Prey or Food: Water, sun, soil, air

Did you know? This grass was introduced from Europe to use for lawns. Today, most American lawns have this water-hogging grass.

The Sun

Plants use the sun's energy to grow through a process known as photosynthesis. Because plants are the beginning of all food chains, all plants and animals transfer the sun's energy when they eat.