

Litter & Wildlife Field Investigation Toolkit

Challenge Objective:

Explore how litter impacts wildlife and take action to protect them.

Challenge Overview:

Through this toolkit, you'll become an environmental investigator. You can do this on your own, with friends, as a club, or with your class. You can...

- Research the impact of litter on wildlife
- Explore an outdoor space to look for signs of both litter and wildlife
- Interview an expert
- Create a field report or citizen science brief documenting your findings
- Share your work and solutions with your community

Short on Time? Choose Your Path:



Explorer:

Do the Explore and Expert Interview steps only



Storyteller:

Focus on Expert Interview and Report Creation



Investigator:

Focus on Research, and create a Poster or Infographic



Advocate:

Create your Field Report and Take Action

RESEARCH

Goal:

Understand why litter is an issue for wildlife.

Activity:

Choose one or more of these to start:

- **Watch or listen:** Look up a video or podcast from a wildlife rehab center on the issue. (Search: “plastic pollution animal rescue” or check your local wildlife center.)
- **Read a story:** Find a local or national news story about wildlife impacted by litter.
- **Ask yourself:** Have you ever noticed how litter or pollution affects wildlife in your community? What impact did it have on you?

Make sure to keep track of any information you’re gathering and start to write down any questions or ideas that come to mind.



EXPLORE

Goal:

Observe how litter and wildlife interact in your local environment.

Choose a site to start your survey:

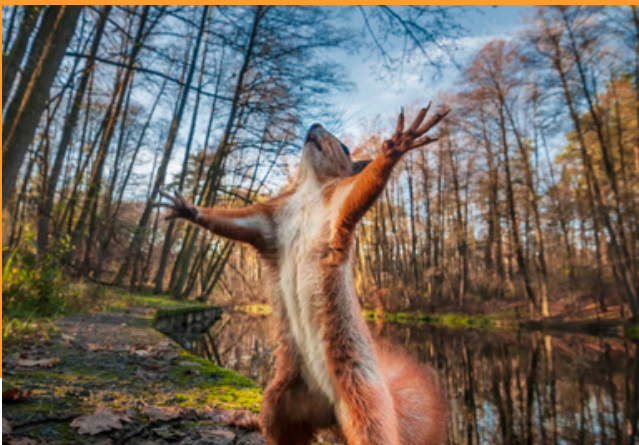
A local park, creek, beach, schoolyard, or even your neighborhood.

Bring the following:

- A notebook, camera, or phone
- Your Litter & Wildlife Survey Sheet (we'll include a template!)
- Optional: Gloves or grabbers to pick up trash during your survey!

Keep your eye out for:

- Types of litter such as plastic, cigarette butts, food containers, etc. (write or snap photos)
- Wildlife or signs of wildlife (animals, nests, tracks, scat, insects, birds)
- Interactions between the two (for example, can you see man-made objects in a bird's nest? An animal near trash piles?)



Tips: Can't get outside today? Watch a wildlife livestream or trail cam!

Minimize your impact on wildlife by keeping a safe distance.

LEARN FROM AN EXPERT

Goal:

Learn from an expert in the field to gain a professional perspective.

Choose One:

- Interview a local wildlife rehabber, vet tech, or animal expert
- Email a few questions to one of the local experts above to gather their insights
- A few sample questions are below!

Sample Questions:

- What kinds of wildlife have you seen impacted by litter or pollution?
- What do you think are the most important steps a community can take to reduce harm to animals?

Write down your key takeaways and come prepared with your own thoughtful questions.



DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS

Goal:

Combine what you learned into a final product.

Include:

- Information on your field survey, including where you went, what you observed, and takeaways
- Any data collected, such as photos, charts, drawings, maps
- What you learned from your interview or research
- Your ideas for solutions - what can be done to prevent this problem?

This can be compiled into:

- A field report
- A citizen science brief
- A short presentation or PSA
- Your own creative idea!



TAKE ACTION

Goal:

Share your findings and spark change in your community!

What's one way you can bring this to your community? Choose one of the following actions (or create your own!):

- Join a volunteer group that's working to address the issue
- Share your project through school announcements, social media, or a club meeting
- Create a flyer or poster to display at your school, local library, or park
- Present your findings to an elementary school class to inspire younger students to get involved
- Organize a community cleanup followed by a presentation on what you found and how litter affects local wildlife
- Submit your findings or reflections to your school newspaper or a local publication
- Email your findings to city leaders or present at a town hall meeting



REFLECTION

You've taken important steps to understand how litter impacts wildlife and importantly, you've done something about it. But this doesn't have to be the end of your journey.

Ask yourself:

- How can I inspire others to care about this issue?
- What would it look like if more people took small actions every day?

Whether you continue by organizing a cleanup, starting a club, sharing your findings with others, or speaking up for local wildlife protections, your voice and actions matter.

