

Do you know what animals live in your backyard?

Texas is home to a variety of wildlife and plant species. From the nine-banded armadillo to the Texas horned lizard, you may be surprised how many different species co-exist with you!

This short guide is meant to help you identify some of the species in Texas and perhaps incorporate them into your classroom and curriculum!

How can I incorporate species and wildlife identification into early childhood education?

Teaching children about wildlife and species identification can be intimidating. However, it can be as simple as showing children images of different species and prompting them to use their imaginations and natural curiosity. Exploring the wildlife in your backyard can be done in many different ways!

Resources: Texas Parks and Wildlife, George Lucas Educational Foundation, Nebraska Game Parks, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Houston Audubon, NAEYC

BIRDS, BEETLES, BUTTERFLIES - OH MY!

CREATING WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY SPACES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS



The northern mockingbird can be found in a variety of habitats. They are known for their singing, and can often sing 10-15 different songs at a time!

Photo Credit: Houston Audubon

Colorful monarch butterflies can be seen migrating through Texas during the spring and fall seasons!

Photo Credit: Houston Museum of Natural Science



Shiny june bugs or june beetles can sometimes be found in your garden or on sidewalks, and they are known for being "leaf-chewers."

Photo Credit: Texas Standard



TIP: Taking your students for a nature walk is a great way to begin introducing them to the different species that reside in your neighborhood. Encourage children to use all of their senses by asking them what shapes, colors, and scents they notice!

Getting Started:

- **Use local field guides or picture books for reference**, and take students outside to search for wildlife. Children can practice species recognition while engaging all of their senses.
- **Create a designated habitat area or garden** in your space to attract small wildlife like birds, pollinators, and small mammals. Include specific plants that attract wildlife, provide shelter and feed for birds, or incorporate a bird bath (always remember to check licensing requirements).
- **Prepare children for what they might expect outdoors** - some may be afraid of wildlife. Talk about what they already know and how they feel about animals and insects.
- **Engage children in art activities** to discuss the different details that you are looking for when identifying and differentiating between species.



ECHO
EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH OUTDOORS