



# VIRTUALLY WILD! COMMUNITIES

ACTIVITY GUIDE FOR  
THE WILDLIFE  
CENTER OF TEXAS



So you watched a *Virtually Wild! Communities* video with your class. Now what? There's a lot to unpack but worry not. We have a few activities to get you started.

Themes from The Wildlife Center of Texas:

- Animals
  - Birds of Prey
  - The value of wildlife for controlling pests
  - How owls hunt vs caracaras.
  - Life cycle & population changes
- Pets vs Wildlife
  - Keep Wildlife WILD, why its important to return them
  - What to do if you find a wild animal
  - Caring for wildlife in the wild and rehabilitation
- Ecosystems
  - Why keep wildlife in urban areas? (Hint: they love eating roaches)
  - How to build a bird/bat box
  - Niches
  - Biodiversity
  - Habitat Fragmentation
  - Interactions between people and the environment

Resources:

- [The Wildlife Center of Texas](#)
- [HERE in Houston Website](#)

Good Books courtesy of Houston Public Library:

Nonfiction (Ages 4-8)

[Animal Helpers. Raptor Centers by Jennifer Keats Curtis](#)

[Animal Helpers. Wildlife Rehabilitators by Jennifer Keats Curtis](#)

Fiction (Grades 3-6)

[A Boy Called Bat by Elana K. Arnold](#)

## Activity Guide for Virtually Wild! Communities

### Don't Mess with Texas' WILDLIFE

#### Activity # 1 Caring for Injured Wildlife

**Time Required: 30 mins**

**Lesson Developers:**

Emma Wilson, Alicia Mein-Johnson, Wildlife Center of Texas

**Materials:**

- [WCT Guide to injured wildlife](#)
- [TPWD orphaned wildlife guide](#)
- Small box, cloth or towel, egg or stuffed animal

**Objectives:**

- ❖ Learn when to intervene in caring for a wild animal
- ❖ Learn to Observe, Replace, and Collect native wildlife

**Grade Level - Science & Social Studies TEKS**

**K-2** – 1-4, 9  
**3-5** – 1-4, 9, 10 & 8

**Procedures**

Time	Activities
5 min	I. Motivation/Warm Up -Ask students if they have ever found a baby bird or other animal and what they did with it. (or if no examples are presented what they think they should do)
10	II. <a href="#">Information</a> -Wild animals are a healthy part of a functioning ecosystem, and though humans pose threats to wildlife through pollution, fragmentation, etc. we can also help them. - It is common to find injured or orphaned animals, but they are <a href="#">better off in the wild</a> . Humans should only interfere if it is clear that the animal won't make it by themselves. - <b>Observe:</b> Watch baby birds and mammals, or injured adults for signs of life. If they are moving and appear to be healthy, leave them be. If they are lethargic, unconscious, or have ants or flies on them, they need help. - <b>Replace:</b> For baby animals, the first step is to reunite them with their parents. Put baby birds in a small basket, or baby squirrels in a box with a soft cloth. Then place the animal in a tree, protected from ants and pests to wait for mom. Wait 2-3 hours for the parents to retrieve them. - <b>Collect:</b> Injured adult animals and babies whose parents don't return will need more help. Don't feed them or give them water. Instead, wrap them in a towel and take them to the Wildlife Center, or closest refuge. Trained staff provide their best chance for survival.
10	III. Practice -Take the class outside to practice the ORC method. Use an egg or small stuffed animal as an example. Watch it, place it in the box with a cloth, and then place it securely in a tree or other high spot. Discuss what makes a good spot. Is it protected from ants? Could the parents get to it? Remind them to wash their hands before and after handling wild animals.
10	IV. Application -Students spend five minutes in a sit spot outdoors, observing wildlife in the neighborhood. Create a flier or letter to a parent, featuring the wildlife they observed and describing the importance of keeping wildlife WILD with the ORC method.

## Activity Guide for Virtually Wild! Communities

### Don't Mess with Texas WILDLIFE

**Activity # 2 Can I keep 'im?**

**Time Required: 40 mins**

**Lesson Developers:**

Emma Wilson, Alicia Mein-Johnson, Wildlife Center of Texas

**Materials:**

- [WCT Guide to injured wildlife](#)
- [Keep Texas WILD Background](#)
- [TPWD orphaned wildlife guide](#)

**Objectives:**

- ❖ Understand the difference between a pet and a wild animal
- ❖ Write a letter petitioning to keep Texas wildlife WILD.

**Grade Level - Science TEKS**

- K-2** – 9
- 3-5** – 9
- 6** – 12

**Procedures**

Time	Activities
5 min	<p>I. Motivation/Warm Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<a href="#">Mirriam Webster</a> Definition of wildlife: living things and especially mammals, birds, and fishes that are neither human nor domesticated.</li> <li>-Discuss the concept of 'domestication'</li> <li>-Have a quick show-and-tell with photos of students' pets (if meeting virtually, students can hold up their pets to the camera).</li> </ul>
10	<p>II. <a href="#">Information</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It is tempting to keep wild animals as pets, but they are not domesticated and generally have needs that humans cannot provide. They need more space and interaction than pets, and (depending on the species) need to develop the skills to be a part of their social groups.</li> <li>-Additionally, wild animals can harm humans, especially when docile babies reach puberty or when animals are handled by well-intentioned but untrained good samaritans.</li> <li>-Domesticated pets are adapted to live with humans and there are many available who need good homes.</li> </ul>
10	<p>III. Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Draw up a list of wild animals one might find in the local ecosystem. Next, make a list of domesticated animals.</li> <li>-Compare and contrast the needs of these animals, and the risks or benefits of keeping these animals.</li> </ul>
15	<p>IV. Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Write a letter to the PTSA, community officials, etc. petitioning them to denounce or ban the private adoption and ownership of wild animals.</li> </ul>
	<p>V. Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Older students can investigate different levels of government and write to each representative.</li> <li>- Younger students could work together with the teacher to write one letter for the class, or make a video.</li> </ul>

## Activity Guide for Virtually Wild! Communities

### Don't Mess with Texas WILDLIFE

#### Activity # 3 Build a Bird/Bat Box

**Time Required: varies**

**Lesson Developers:**

Emma Wilson, Alicia Mein-Johnson, Wildlife Center of Texas

**Materials:**

- How-to [Guide for Bird Houses](#)
- How-to [Guide for Bat Boxes](#)
- Wood, tools, and sundries (details in guides)
- Photo of owl, bat, and songbird houses.

**Objectives:**

- ❖ Discuss how wildlife enhance urban spaces and should be protected
- ❖ Observe differences in animals' habitats
- ❖ Build a box for owls, birds, or bats.

**Grade Level - Science TEKS**

- K-2** – 1-4, 9, 10 Plus various Math & Engineering TEKS  
**3-5** – 1-4, 9, 10  
**6** – 1-4, 12  
**7** – 1-4, 10  
**8** – 1-4, 11

**Procedures**

Time	Activities
5 min	I. Motivation/Warm Up -Show the class an owl house, a bat box, and a songbird house. Have students guess which animal each house belongs to. Discuss niche habitats and generalists vs specialists.
15	II. Information -Wildlife provides humans with natural pest control services and is fun to watch. Their habitats are varied and can be specific or general. Each species fills a different niche. Though human development threatens many tree-dwelling animals' habitats, humans can intervene by building homes for them. -Birdhouses and bat boxes are a unique way to help out our wild friends. Unlike a birdfeeder, these nests are less likely to attract every animal and can help provide a niche habitat for vulnerable species.
10	III. Practice -Talk about design! Get the kids involved in planning the location for the box, designing the box and deciding for what species, and measuring the type and quantity of materials. Integrate math and engineering skills. -Consider with the students what species they want to attract: How much space do they need? how will they get in and out? Will they need a perch? How high up should the box be? How will it stay protected from predators? Will they be able to clean it out if necessary?
	IV. Application -Build the birdhouse or bat box, then place it in an appropriate location. Check back later to see if it is being used. Did it attract the species it was designed for? If not, troubleshoot the design and location.
	V. Modifications -For younger students, pre-cut pieces or make a box ahead of time as appropriate. Make one box as a class. -For older students, involve them in the design and construction of individual boxes. They can take them home or donate them to a park or refuge.