

NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF
WILDLIFE



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Let's Learn About Wildlife

CARRYING CAPACITY



All living things exist at population levels or in numbers that are limited by the ability of the surrounding habitat to support them. This is called **carrying capacity**. For each living thing, survival is based upon the ability to obtain three basic resources: food, water and cover. A decrease in any one item will lead toward a decrease in the population. So it is easy to understand that when hard winters or large fires occur and harm the habitat, the capacity of the habitat to support the population is greatly diminished. Similarly, if the population should greatly increase in number, then the resources will be used up more quickly. In either case, the rule of nature is that the strong survive and the weak perish.

Wildlife Education: No Child Left Inside

Recent headlines have announced once again that nature is important to our kids! You may be shocked that this is so, or you may be shocked that it's a headline. Chalk it up to the author of a book that is getting a lot of attention. Richard Louv, in "Last Child in the Woods," says that children today are suffering from "nature deficit disorder." In the tradition of Joseph Cornell ("Listening to Nature") and David Sobel ("Beyond Ecophobia"), Louv has petitioned for the case of getting kids back outdoors. This might seem like a no-brainer to folks who grew up looking under rocks and climbing trees. However, in twenty-first century America, kids may be kept away from nature for fear of the unknown. That, in turn, may be keeping them from learning important life lessons. Most people know the healing effects of fresh air and sunshine. Contact with the outdoors definitely affects the psyche, but it can also affect children's health. In fact, when kids used to eagerly dig in the dirt and wade in streams long ago, they built up their immunity to the germs in the environment. Staying indoors in front of electronic devices puts that immunity at risk. It's up to us – educators, parents, caregivers – to connect children with their natural environment once more. The new movement that Louv and others have started is called "No Child Left Inside," and is a word play on the mandated "No Child Left Behind" Act of 2001.

Art Contest Open to All Students

Students K—12 are invited to submit artwork for the 2008 Junior Duck Stamp Contest. Each year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sponsors this contest to design a federal duck stamp that is sold for \$5.00. The proceeds are earmarked for environmental and education programs. To learn more about the contest, go to <http://www.fws.gov/juniorduck/>.



"Earth and sky, woods and fields, lakes and rivers, the mountain and the sea, are excellent schoolmasters, and teach some of us more than we can ever learn from books."

- Sir John Lubbock



Mule Deer



There are several species of deer in the U.S., including caribou, moose, and elk. Two common species that are actually named deer include the white-tailed deer and the mule deer. White-tailed deer live throughout much of the U.S., but here in the west it is the mule deer that we see. The mule deer is named for its large ears that resemble those found on a mule. These animals stand about three feet tall at the shoulder, and can weigh from 125 to 330 pounds. They have a tail that is short and black-tipped. Deer are ruminants and ungulates. Ruminants are animals like cows that have more than one stomach. Ungulates are animals with hooves. All male deer grow antlers beginning in late winter through summer. The difference between antlers and horns is that antlers are shed yearly, and horns are permanent.

Mule deer, which are herbivores, live at higher elevations during the summer, and move to lower elevations in the winter. Here there is more browse, or vegetative material available. Mules, as they are called, especially prefer arid open areas with rocky hillsides. Bedding down in the heat of the day, they like to look for food in the early morning and in the evening. They have their fawns in the summer and can live over ten years in the wild. However, these deer are under pressure due to loss of their habitat, especially from drought and fire. Nevada Department of Wildlife regularly monitors the populations so that they can make recommendations for hunting allotments.



Fun Fact: Mule deer can jump up right off of all four legs. This is called stotting, and they can even turn direction in mid-air! Stotting is an adaptation to escape from predators like coyotes and mountain lions.



Animal Adaptations



Do you wear a coat in the winter? Even in the Mojave Desert, people and animals need to find warmth in the cold temperatures. While some animals escape the cold by burrowing underground or by migrating, most of the desert mammals grow their own winter coat. Animals like rabbits change their fur coats with the season, and that's called *molting*. Elk and deer grow thicker, heavier fur in the winter. The winter coat of a mule deer is gray, while its summer coat is more brown. The coats of mountain coyotes become long and silky. Bighorn sheep have a glossy brown coat in summer, but in winter it fades and becomes thick and wooly. Bobcats have a very beautiful winter coat of soft, thick fur.



Where does wildlife go in winter?

In the Mojave Desert, wintertime can mean temperatures near freezing. Cold-blooded reptiles, like the desert tortoise, seek shelter underground. Tortoises and snakes retreat to burrows to hibernate, or brumate, for the entire cold season. Lizards usually look for deep rock crevices to hide and may come out on a warm day to bask in the sun. In winter months, the biggest problem for large shrub-grazing animals like elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep is finding food. Mountain lions especially find easy hunting as sheep and deer herds gather in small areas to find the sparse vegetation. Birds migrating south for the winter can be seen in good numbers. Bald eagles, golden eagles, turkey vultures, the American kestrel, as well as Cooper's red-tailed and ferruginous hawks can be seen beginning in December.

Endangered Species Success: Gray Wolf

There was a time during the last century when wolves were considered a threat to human settlements, especially homesteads and farms. These animals were vigorously hunted to the point of extirpation due to bounties on them and also due to unregulated market hunting. The wolves' natural prey, such as beaver and bison, was also overhunted and decreased in numbers. Added to that was the destruction of the animals' natural habitat due to logging.

Historically, the gray wolf range covered most of the United States. Today there are only three sub-populations in Minnesota, Michigan, and the northern Rocky Mountains. The gray wolf was first put on the endangered species list in 1974 and since then, the Great Lakes population has made a significant recovery. With over 1200 individuals reported by the



Photo Credit: Tracy Brooks/Mission Wolf/S Fish & Wildlife Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the wolves in the Rockies are ready to be delisted as well.

Now that the population numbers have increased, will wolves once again become a problem to farmers and ranchers, especially in Nevada? Only time will tell. Meanwhile, biologists consider the wolves that wander into Nevada from neighboring states to be part of the Rocky Mountain population segment. That means that they would be included in the delisting and subject to depredation control, which would only allow wolves to be taken if they are killing livestock or causing human harm.

Illegal Wildlife Trade



Wildlife trade in simple terms is any sale or exchange of wild animal and plant resources. This can involve live animals and plants for the pet and horticultural trades, or the trade in a diverse range of wild animal and plant products needed by humans – including skins, medicinal ingredients, tourist curios, timber, fish and other food products. Most wildlife trade is legal and is not a problem. However, the second-biggest threat to species survival, after habitat destruction, is illegal wildlife trade. It causes direct harm through overexploitation of targeted species, and indirect harm through the introduction of invasive species and incidental killing of non-target species. The best way to encourage sustainability in wildlife trade is by regulating it and educating people why limits are necessary.

Abbreviated from www.traffic.org

Project Wild

NDOW's Southern Region office completed its second set of Project Wild / Aquatic Wild Workshops this fall. Each workshop took place on two Saturdays, for one full Clark County School District Professional Development credit. Since the wildlife education program is no longer able to provide in-classroom presentations, Project Wild teacher training will be the primary tool for teachers to introduce wildlife topics and activities to their students.

More workshops are planned for the spring, so keep an eye out for the announcement. Check out our wildlife education page at the NDOW website, <http://www.ndow.org/learn/programs/region/south/index.shtm>, and you can see what we've been up to. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Margie Klein, Conservation Educator, Nevada Department of Wildlife, 4747 Vegas Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89108, (702) 486-5127 X 3502, mbklein@ndow.org.





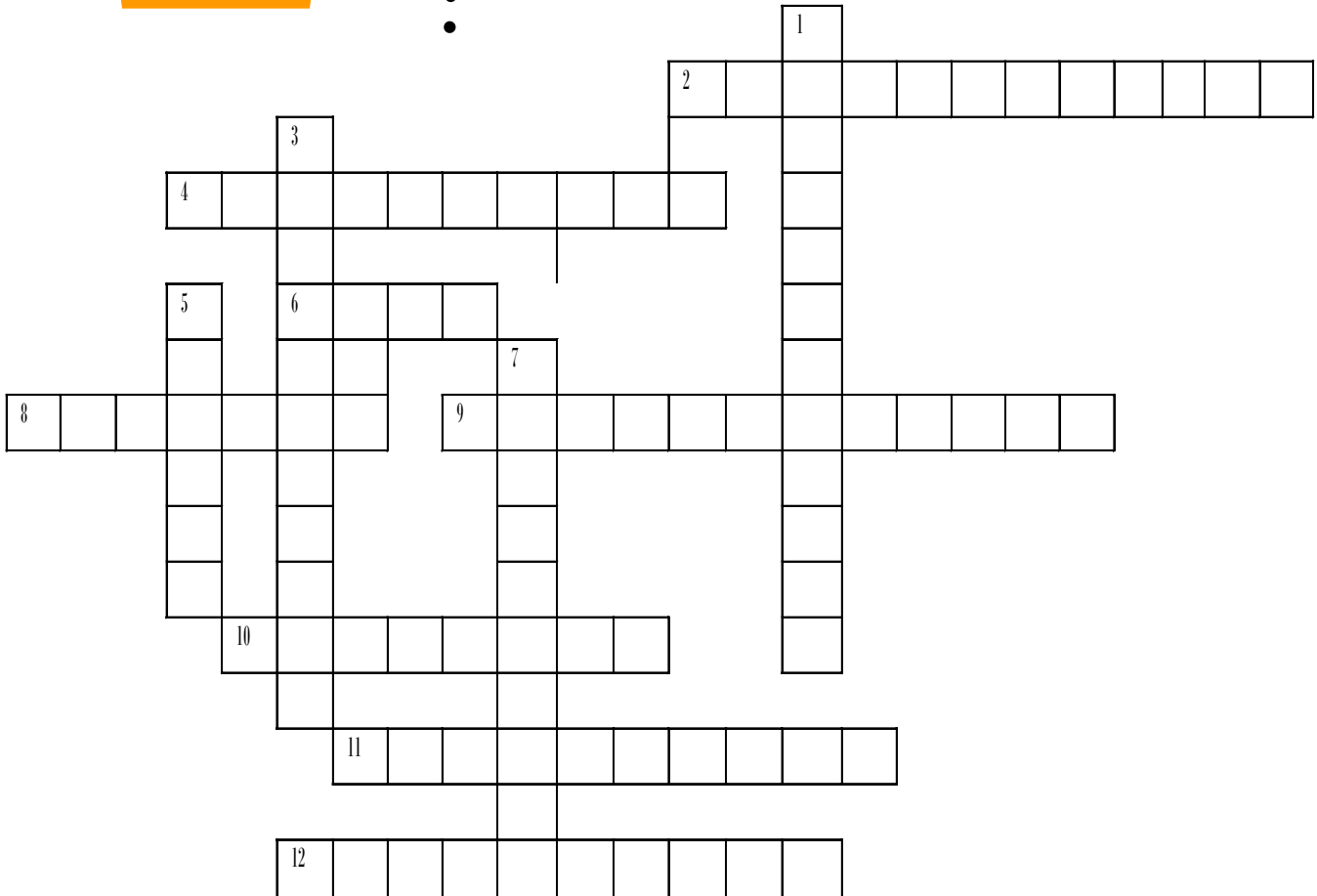
Wildlife Crossword Puzzle

Across

2. Also known as puma, cougar, panther, and catamount.
4. Cactus named for a flat-tailed mammal.
6. _____ monster.
8. Bird is often seen soaring over desert skies.
9. Animal has huge curled horns.
10. A pig also known as white-collared peccary.
11. Wile E. Coyote's nemesis.
12. Large rabbit has big ears and long hind legs.

Down

1. Small owl that lives underground.
3. Bouncy rat.
5. Desert fox.
7. Snake that gets ahead by moving sideways.



Answers:

Across

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 2. Mountain lion | 9. Bighorn sheep |
| 4. Beavertail | 10. Javelina |
| 6. Gila | 11. Roadrunner |
| 8. Vulture | 12. Jackrabbit |

Down

1. Burrowing owl
3. Kangaroo rat
5. Kit fox
7. Sidewinder