



# Urban Nature Search



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Every environment has its characteristic plants and animals. The urban environment is no exception and many species have adjusted to sharing their environment with people. This urban or human environment has been shaped by us but still includes many species found in undeveloped areas. During this activity you will search for evidence that wildlife also shares our environments. You may not be able to find all the evidence requested below. This list is to aid in your thinking about urban habitats.

In your journal or on a separate piece of paper record what you found.

## Plants –

- Tally, describe or sketch different plants growing in the area.
- Do the plants differ on the north vs. south sides of buildings
- Do you see any evidence that part of the plant may have been eaten by an animal?
- Record any evidence of plant disease or insect damage such as galls or tent caterpillars.

## Animals –

- Food Chains
  - Search for evidence of predator/prey relationships. If you see a bird, mammal or insect, attempt to determine what is its predator or prey.
  - Look for partially eaten leaves or plant stems. Can you determine whether they were eaten by an insect, mammal or other animal?
- Inventories
  - Look for birds
    - Tally the different species
    - If they are migrating, sketch the pattern of flight
    - Watch for different behaviors such as feeding, nesting, or establishing territories.
  - Look for insects
    - Observe a bee or butterfly pollinating flowers and gathering nectar
    - Look for predatory insects such as a praying mantis or ladybug. Be still and maybe you can watch it catch another insect
  - Look for mammals
    - What for squirrels, rabbits and other small mammals.
    - Where do they find shelter?
    - Is this different from their shelter in an undeveloped area?
  - Look for spiders
    - How many different types of webs can you find?
    - Did all the spiders you found live in webs?
      - Where else were the spiders living?

➤ **Abiotic Features –**

- Record the temperature on different sides of the buildings at various times during the day.
- Look for evidence of freezing and thawing on sidewalks
  - Have any plants or animals taken advantage of cracks in the sidewalk?
  - Have any trees pushed up the sidewalk with their roots?
- Trace the path of water after a rain storm – such as through a vacant lot and down the street into a drain.
  - Note any signs of erosion
- Look for signs of man’s existence such as litter.
  - Are any animals using litter in their nests?

➤ **Other observations –**

- Look for evidence of the components of **Habitat**: food, water, shelter and space in a suitable arrangement.
- Find a quiet space in your environment. Stop and listen for 2 minutes and record sounds.

Sketch the environment you just observed. Is it “friendly” towards plants and wildlife? Can you improve the area? In what ways?



Research kits to go with activity

- ☐ Beach pail with shovel
- ☐ Aquarium net for capturing insects
- ☐ Ruler
- ☐ Notebook with pencil
- ☐ Bug box
- ☐ Magnifying glass