

# National Wildlife Day

**Actual Holiday:** February 22  
and September 4

**First Celebrated:** 2005



## Introduction

Founded in 2005 by animal behaviorist and philanthropist Colleen Paige, National Wildlife Day is a day to bring awareness of the plight facing animals all around the globe. National Wildlife Day honors Australian wildlife-warrior Steve Irwin's life's work by taking place on the day he was born (February 22nd) and the day he died (September 4th). Celebrate this holiday in your classroom by learning about what kids can do in their homes and neighborhoods to help wildlife.

## Materials

- *What I Can Do* activity sheet (page 11)
- pencils
- art supplies

## The Activity

- Tell students that today they will be celebrating National Wildlife Day. This is a day to help people become aware of the dangers facing wildlife and try to help some more vulnerable species. When we think of wildlife, we may think of animals we see in the zoo or that we might catch a glimpse of on a hike. We don't often think of the insects and birds that we see around us in our daily lives. But these animals are also part of wildlife, and we can do our part to help them. Share the following information with students:

### **Helpful Wildlife**

- Birds are all around us. We might hear them singing in the mornings or see them flying around the trees in our neighborhoods. They are helpful to us in many ways. They eat insects that can harm our food. They spread seeds that help more plants grow. And they respond to changes in our environment, which can help warn us if there is something that we need to look out for.
- Helpful insects such as butterflies and bees are also important to our environment. They help pollinate plants, which helps fruit, vegetables, and flowers to grow. Many plants could not grow without them.

### **How You Can Help Birds**

- You can make bird feeders for your backyard or balcony. (You could also buy a bird feeder but making one from a milk jug or plastic bottle can be a fun craft to try.) Most birds like black oil sunflower seeds, but if you want to know exactly what to feed them, you could look to see which birds are in your neighborhood, work with a parent or other adult to identify them on the internet, and then look up the best food choices.
- You can provide water for them. This doesn't have to be a fancy birdbath—you can place a shallow dish above ground level (and away from where any cats could reach it). Make sure the water is not too deep and change it once a week. Then watch how many birds stop by for a drink or a quick bath.

### **How You Can Help Butterflies, Bees, and Other Helpful Insects**

- You can learn about plants that are native to your area that butterflies and bees would love. Then you can add them to your yard or make a container garden for a patio or balcony. Milkweed is a great plant to have if you want to attract monarch butterflies. Ask an adult to help you research.
  - You can ask your parents or other family members not to rake up all the leaves in your yard or just leave a pile in an area where helpful insects, such as ladybugs or earthworms, can find a safe place to rest.
  - You can use an old milk jug or plastic container to make an insect hotel. Cut a hole in the side and then fill it with pinecones, sticks, tree bark, leaves, or whatever else you think bugs might enjoy. Then place it in an out-of-the-way area and watch to see who your first hotel visitors will be.
- Ask students if they can think of other ways to help birds, butterflies, bees, and other helpful insects. Write their suggestions on the board.
  - Distribute the *What I Can Do* activity sheet to students. Have them think about what they would most like to do to help these animals. Have them write about and draw pictures of themselves doing one thing to help birds and one thing to help butterflies, bees, and other helpful insects.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# What I Can Do

To help birds, I can \_\_\_\_\_

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I can be a friend to butterflies, bees, and other helpful insects by \_\_\_\_\_

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