

Naturalist's Notebook

Objective

Students will observe and record the behavior of a San Diego wetland animal, and the characteristics of its environment.



Western snowy plover
(*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*)

Materials

- Naturalist's Notebook* observation sheet, on reverse
- clipboard or other portable writing surface
- pencil
- watch
- optional: binoculars, magnifying glass, tweezers

Action

1. Visit one of San Diego County's wetland areas. (This may require some "scouting" visits to determine which area has a good quantity of active animals.) Students are to record the behavior of a wild animal that lives there. The animal should be visible, identifiable, and active. Students should find a suitable observation post and observe the animal for 30 minutes. If possible, have students photograph behavior examples after the 30-minute observation period is over.
2. Students use their observation sheet to record information about the observation location, the animal, and its behavior. Some behavior they may observe includes resting or sleeping, grooming, eating, flying, watchful behavior, aggressive activity, and social or individual "play" (actions that appear to have no obvious immediate function).
3. Students record how much time the animal spends exhibiting each type of behavior or how many times it does each type of behavior within the 30-minute observation period. You may wish to have students calculate the percentage of times the animal spends doing each observed behavior.
4. After completing their observations, students discuss them in class.
5. Students write reports summarizing their findings and present their reports to the class. Allow the rest of the class to question or comment on each report. Give students the opportunity to revise and edit their reports before turning them in.

Extension

Students may use the library to research their animals. Instruct them to look for explanations for the behavior they observed.

Students may return to the same location and observe their animals (or any other of the same species) each day for five days or more. Suggest returning during various times of the day. Do the students observe any different kinds of behavior?

