



Using Simulations for Instructional Purposes

An educational simulation is an instructional activity that models aspects of the real world to teach one or more concepts. Simulations—especially those that involve students in kinesthetic learning experiences—are used frequently in Project WILD.

In conducting simulations for instructional purposes, you must remember that the activity can take on a life of its own. Students can become so involved in the role they are playing that they forget to relate the objects, events, and processes to what they represent in nature.

Students of all ages may tend to become competitive when they are responsible for capturing or escaping the animals depicted in an activity. Antic and energetic physical behavior often results. During such activity, students identify subjectively with the role they are playing. This identification is important and should be encouraged as part of the powerful learning that is possible through simulations. Yet it also is important to link the subjective experience with the objective concepts that are central to each activity.

Distinguish between what is realistic and what is not realistic about the simulation. Simulations, by definition, are simple representations of more

complex natural interactions. Through discussion following simulation activities, teachers should help students understand how the simulation is like and unlike the real situation.

Simulations always leave out some elements that exist in nature. They simplify to make a point. Make sure students are clear about the point and the limitations of the activity in demonstrating the complexities of real-world situations.

Simulations in *Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide* include the following activities:

A Dire Diet
Animal Charades
Ants on a Twig
Bat Blitz
Busy Bees, Busy Blooms
Carrying Capacity
Changing the Land
Checks and Balances
Deer Dilemma
Habitat Circles
Keeping Cool
Limiting Factors: How Many Bears?

Monarch Marathon
Muskox Maneuvers
Oh Deer!
Phenology at Play
Quick-Frozen Critters
Seed Need
Sustainability: Then, Now, Later
Thicket Game
To Zone or Not to Zone
Trophic Transfer

