 Albemarle County Public Schools			Subject: Animals in the Classrooms SOP		
Document No.:	Issue Date:	Last Revised:	Page:	Prepared By:	Approved By:
SOP-ANIM-01	4/3/2009	4/3/2009	1 of 6	LCS	CH, JPL, GS, JCL

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to:

- Ensure the greatest possible level of safety for students and staff regarding animals on school property
- Ensure the adequate care and appropriate environment for animals in the schools
- Help teachers with the decision-making process regarding bringing animals into the classroom
- Provide a specific protocol for teachers considering bringing animals into the classroom

Note: The following procedures are intended to be minimum guidelines to be followed for Albemarle County Public Schools. Principals of schools may administer more stringent rules, limitations or guidelines concerning animals in the schools.

2.0 PROCEDURE

2.1 Resident and Visiting Animals in School

The same guidelines apply for resident and visiting animals except where specified.

2.1.1 Allergy Survey

- Teacher must examine all student health records to ensure students do not have a specific allergy to animal(s)
- If this information is not readily available in health records, teachers should elicit this information from parents of student(s) prior to animal entering classroom
- Teachers should also survey any custodial or instructional staff that will come into contact with the animal(s)

2.1.2 Approval and Consideration

- Requesting teacher must fill out "Animal Request Form" (Appendix A) and present this form to the Principal.
- If the animal is approved, this form should be kept for at least 2 years as a record of the approval and existence of the animal in the school
- The Principal, school nurse, and requesting teacher will make a final decision regarding the approval of the resident animal after considering allergy surveys

2.1.3 Care of Resident Animal

- Requesting teacher must assume responsibility for care of animal



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- A. Animals must be properly housed
 - B. Animals must have adequate food and water at all times
 - C. Habitats must be kept thoroughly clean on a regular basis
 - If further cleaning/sanitizing instructions are needed for any specific animal/situation, contact the Environmental Manager at 975-9340
 - D. Remember that care of resident animals is not a custodial function
- Teacher must have plan for adequate care of animal over weekends, holiday breaks, summer break, or emergency school evacuations
 - All student contact with animals must be organized and supervised by teacher
 - All students who handle animals should wash hands with soap and warm water immediately afterwards
 - Animals should never be allowed to freely roam the classroom
 - Animals should never be allowed near/in food preparation areas
 - Students should be discouraged from “kissing” animals or having them in close contact with their faces
 - No student or staff member with a known allergy to an animal should be allowed to care for that particular animal

2.2 Selecting Resident and Visiting Animals

Please See Appendix B (attached) for a summary and explanation of the animals allowed, conditionally allowed, and not allowed. The same guidelines apply for resident and visiting animals except where specified.

2.2.1 All Animals Must be Disease-free

- Teacher must ensure animal is free of transmissible diseases
 - A. Animal should be examined by a licensed veterinarian prior to entering classroom
 - B. If animal is from pet store or warehouse, obtain vaccination or health records

2.2.2 Unacceptable Animals

- **Wild Animals** –For the purpose of this procedure, a wild animal is ANY mammal that is **NOT** one of the following:
 - A. Domestic dog
 - B. Domestic cat
 - C. Domestic ungulate (e.g. cow, sheep, goat, pig)
 - D. Pet rabbit



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E. Pet rodent (e.g. mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas)

Wild animals tend to exhibit unpredictable behavior and are carriers of rabies and other *zoonotic diseases* (i.e., diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans). Examples of wild animals not allowed are **skunks, raccoons, bats, foxes, deer and wild carnivores.**

- **Poisonous Animals**
 - A. Poisonous spiders
 - B. Venomous insects
 - C. Poisonous reptiles (including snakes)
 - D. Poisonous amphibians
- **Wolf-dog Hybrids** – These animals have displayed a propensity for aggression towards young children
- **Stray Animals** – The vaccination status and general health of these animals is unknown
- **Aggressive Animals**
 - A. Animals displaying unprovoked, threatening behavior should be immediately removed from the classroom
 - B. Animals known to have a propensity towards aggression should not be allowed to enter the classroom (i.e. pit bulls)

2.2.3 Conditions for Specific Animals

The following animals are conditionally allowed as resident or visiting animals in the school, due to zoonotic diseases they may carry or certain behavioral tendencies. Please observe the following guidelines.

- **Psittacine Birds** (parrots, lorries, cockatiels & parakeets) – These birds can transmit *Chlamydia psittaci* to humans
 - A. Before entering the school, psittacine birds should be treated by a licensed veterinarian for 45 days prior with appropriate medication for psittacosis. Responsible teachers should keep records of this treatment.
 - B. The birds’ cages must be kept clean and their wastes must be contained within the cage until disposed of (See Section 2.4 for proper waste disposal guidelines)



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- **Reptiles and Amphibians** (including non-poisonous snakes, lizards, turtles and iguanas) – These animals can transmit salmonella to humans.
 - A. These animals should only be handled by teachers and professionals who have experience and training doing so
 - B. These animals should be kept and displayed in cases that provide an adequate physical barrier between the animal and students (e.g. sturdy glass or plastic)

- **Baby Chicks and Hatchlings** – These animals can easily transmit salmonella and campylobacter to humans. Transmission of these diseases to children is well documented in medical literature.
 - A. Procurement of eggs and egg hatching program should be performed through the Virginia Cooperative Extension’s (VCE) “Beginning of Life” 4-H program. See Science Instructional Coordinator for program details.
 - B. Student contact with baby chicks/egg hatching should be closely monitored and supervised.
 - C. Students must wash hands with warm soap and water after any contact with baby chicks or hatching eggs.
 - D. Chicks must be removed from classroom once hatched (they may not become resident animals)

- **Ferrets** – Ferrets can transmit rabies, and also have a propensity to bite when startled.
 - A. Ferrets must be vaccinated for rabies before entering school as resident or visitor. Responsible teacher should keep records of this vaccination.
 - B. Ferrets should only be handled by teacher/professional responsible for them.
 - C. A health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof of vaccination against canine distemper should be available and kept
 - D. Ferrets should have had a negative fecal exam or proof of successful treatment for internal parasites in the past year
 - E. Ferrets should be free of external parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites, and free of skin lesions

- **Dogs** – Dogs can transmit various diseases if not appropriately vaccinated
 - A. Current rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian should be procured and kept



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- B. A health certificate signed by a license veterinarian showing proof of vaccination against canine distemper and canine hepatitis should be available for visiting dogs, and kept on file for residential dogs.
- C. Dogs should have had a negative fecal exam or proof of successful treatment for internal parasites in the past year
- D. Dogs should be free of external parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites, and free of skin lesions

- **Cats** – Cats can transmit various diseases if not appropriately vaccinated
 - A. Current rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian should be procured and kept
 - B. A health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian showing proof of vaccination against feline distemper and feline leukemia should be available and kept
 - C. Cats should have had a negative fecal exam or proof of successful treatment for internal parasites in the past year
 - D. Cats should be free of external parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites, and free of skin lesions

2.2.4 Suggested Animals for Residence or Visitation

- Small pet rodents (e.g. mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas)
- Pet rabbits
- Aquarium fish (fresh or salt water)
- Non-psittacine cage and aviary birds (e.g. canaries, finches, doves, mynahs)

2.2.5 Animals Supervised by Virginia Cooperative Extension or 4-H Program

Animals temporarily brought to school and supervised by a Virginia Cooperative Extension or 4-H Program are allowed.

NOTICE: If you are unsure as to whether a certain animal is allowed / acceptable, please consult the Environmental Manager (975-9340) and/or the Science Instructional Coordinator (296-5820) for further guidance and information.

2.3 **Collecting Live Species in the Classroom**

Virginia State Law [4 VAC 15-360-10] stipulates the number and type of wild animals one can legally accrue or possess at any given time. Please familiarize yourself with *Educators and Virginia's Wildlife Laws* (Appendix E). This document, issued by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, sets "personal possession limits" on the number of each type of species that can be legally collected at one time. Please keep this document in an easily accessible location for future reference.



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2.4 Animal Waste Disposal

- Animal wastes should be disposed of frequently as to avoid contamination
- Students should never handle, clean, or dispose of any form of animal waste (feces, blood, urine, etc.)
- Animal waste should be disposed of where students will not readily come into contact with it, such as in a sealed plastic bag, container with a well-fitted lid, or via the sewage waste system for feces
- Food handlers should never be involved in the clean-up or disposal of animal waste
- Animal waste disposal is not a custodial function, and if waste is not properly taken care of, it is grounds for removal of the animal

2.5 Injuries from Animals

If a student is bitten, scratched, or otherwise injured by an animal on school property:

- Notify the school nurse immediately, or call 911 if bite or injury appears serious
- Inform the Principal, including the student's name, type of animal, and type of injury
- The Principal and/or teacher should notify the student's parents of the injury
- The Principal and/or teacher should notify the Animal Control Center and follow procedures recommended by Center officials

2.6 Humane Treatment

In order to avoid abuse, mistreatment, or neglect of resident or visiting animals, the humane care recommendations of the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) should be upheld. (See Appendix C).

2.7 Transportation of Animals

- Animals MAY NOT be transported on school buses at any time
- Animals assisting with a disability are an exception (See Section 2.8)

2.8 Assistance Animals

Animals trained or being trained to assist individuals with disabilities will be allowed in school under the following circumstances:

- The Principal has approved the animal
- The animal has an appropriate health certificate and vaccination on file with the school (See Section 2.2)

Appendix A
Summary of Animals in Schools

ANIMAL	CONTROL	EXPLANATION
Wild Animals (See definition in Section 2.2.2) ➤ e.g., Bats, skunks, raccoon, foxes, wild carnivores, deer	Not allowed	Rabies and other diseases
Poisonous Animals	Not allowed	May bite; could be deadly
Birds		
➤ Finches, doves, mynahs, canaries	Allowed	
➤ Psittacine birds (parrots, macaws, cockatiels, parakeets)	Conditionally allowed. See Section 2.2.3, Psittacine Birds	Large parrots and macaws can inflict serious bites. All may carry psittacosis, a bacterial disease that can remain dormant for long periods of time
➤ Baby chicks, ducks	Conditionally allowed. See Section 2.2.3, Baby chicks, ducks and hatching	Possibly infected with salmonella and campylobacter bacteria; cause many cases of illnesses in children
➤ Predatory birds (hawks, eagles, owls)	Not allowed	May inflict serious bite or injuries associated with talons
Fish (salt water and fresh water)	Allowed	
Reptiles, amphibians (turtles, iguanas, lizards, snakes, frogs, salamanders)	Conditionally allowed. See Section 2.2.3, Reptiles and Amphibians	All carry salmonella bacteria; have caused many cases of illness in children
Mammals		
➤ Rodents (domestic rats, mice, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas)	Allowed	
➤ Rabbits	Allowed	
➤ Ferrets	Conditionally Allowed. See Section 2.2.3, Ferrets	May bite when startled; may carry diseases
➤ Cats and dogs	Conditionally Allowed. See Sections 2.3.1 & 2.3.2	May carry diseases when not properly vaccinated
➤ Monkeys	Not Allowed	May bite; may carry diseases
➤ Wolf-dog hybrids	Not Allowed	Propensity for aggression and unprovoked biting
➤ Stray Animals	Not Allowed	Unknown history, health or vaccination status

**Appendix B
Animal Request Form**

1. School _____
2. Teacher _____
3. Classroom _____
4. Type Animal Requested _____
5. Visiting or Resident _____
6. If Visiting, Date(s) of Requested Visitation _____
7. Any student(s) with animal-related allergies in classroom? Yes _____ No _____
8. If so, Names of Student(s)

9. Vaccinations or health records available for animal(s)? Yes _____ No _____

Principal's Signature

Date

*****Keep this record for at least 2 years*****

Appendix C

Including Live Animals in the Classroom

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) supports including live animals as part of instruction in the K-12 science classroom because observing and working with animals firsthand can spark students' interest in science as well as a general respect for life while reinforcing key concepts as outlined in the NSES.

NSTA recommends that teachers

- Educate themselves about the safe and responsible use of animals in the classroom. Teachers should seek information from reputable sources and familiarize themselves with laws and regulations in their state.
- Become knowledgeable about the acquisition and care of animals appropriate to the species under study so that both students and the animals stay safe and healthy during all activities.
- Follow local, state, and national laws, policies, and regulations when live organisms, particularly native species, are included in the classroom.
- Integrate live animals into the science program based on sound curriculum and pedagogical decisions.
- Develop activities that promote observation and comparison skills that instill in students an appreciation for the value of life and the importance of caring for animals responsibly.
- Instruct students on safety precautions for handling live organisms and establish a plan for addressing such issues as allergies and fear of animals.
- Develop and implement a plan for future care or disposition of animals at the conclusion of the study as well as during school breaks and summer vacations.
- Espouse the importance of not conducting experimental procedures on animals if such procedures are likely to cause pain, induce nutritional deficiencies, or expose animals to parasites, hazardous/toxic chemicals, or radiation.
- Shelter animals when the classroom is being cleaned with chemical cleaners, sprayed with pesticides, and during other times when potentially harmful chemicals are being used.
- Refrain from releasing animals into a non-indigenous environment.



Educators and Virginia's Wildlife Laws

by Carol A. Heiser, Wildlife Division

At teacher workshops, programs, and other educator trainings around the state we are frequently asked questions about wildlife laws. "What kinds of animals can I keep in my classroom?" "Is it O.K. to buy native animals for educational purposes?" "What do I do if one of my students brings a bird nest or an injured animal to school?"

In this article we will try to provide a basic overview of some of the most widely cited wildlife laws to help answer these questions.

However, this article is only a general summary of wildlife laws in Virginia and does not attempt to address all laws, permits, conditions, or exceptions. If you have questions about more specific aspects of the law, please call one of the contacts listed at the end of this article.

Why We Have Wildlife Laws

Between 1700 and 1900, Virginia's landscape changed dramatically. Increasing numbers of settlers



meant a sharp rise in the number of forested acres that were cleared for agriculture, new communities, and transportation for commerce. During the same period, wide-scale and unregulated hunting and trapping of large game and other fur-bearing mammals for the meat market trade put additional pressure on wildlife populations. The demand for feathers in ladies' hats for

The feathers of the great blue heron were used to adorn ladies' hats in the 1800s.

the millinery trade also severely impacted wild bird populations.

The extensive habitat loss that resulted from clearing large acreages of the eastern deciduous forest was the primary factor that caused sharp reductions in wildlife population numbers. With habitat being reduced at such rapid rates, combined with the effects of unregulated harvesting, many wildlife species could not adapt successfully to survive, and some species were virtually non-existent by the early 1900s.

Few people realize, for example, that by 1911 there were no beaver left in Virginia, white-tailed deer were rare in the western part of the state, Canada geese were infrequently sighted, and the Carolina parakeet, the elk, and the bison had long since disappeared.

Because of this history and a growing realization of the economic value of wildlife, Virginia officially began its wildlife conservation efforts in 1916 with the passage of a law that established the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries. Today, as then, one of the missions of the DGIF is "to manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth."

Since 1916, many wildlife-related laws have been passed that protect game as well as non-game species. These laws have substantially helped curb declining population numbers such that many species have experienced a successful comeback. For example, the deer population in Virginia is now greater than it was when settlers first came to the continent, and beaver populations have become re-established throughout the state. The great blue heron has also made a tremendous recovery since the turn of the century.

Wildlife laws also serve to control commercial exploitation and illegal trade. Game laws set hunting seasons that do not conflict with breeding seasons and bag limits that regulate animal harvest. Other laws require specific permits to collect, possess, propagate, exhibit, or sell native species. In addition, wildlife laws that restrict importation ensure that non-native species are not introduced from other states or countries that might otherwise compete native species, dilute the natural gene pool, alter the environment, or introduce diseases.

How Wildlife Laws Are Made

The complexity of wildlife laws may make you wonder how all those details are actually worked out. The process involves two decision-making bodies: the General Assembly of Virginia, and the Board of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

A bill that is introduced to the General Assembly must be passed by both houses of that body before it can be sent to the Governor. Once it has been passed, the Governor must sign the bill in order for it to become law. Laws of the Commonwealth established this way are then written into Virginia State Code. The numbers given in parenthesis at the end of each law quoted in this article refer to a section of regulation or Code.

Since most laws cannot cover all of the details that may be needed to effectively carry them out, additional regulations are written to cover the specifics. This “nuts and bolts” part of the process is where the DGIF comes in. The staff and Board of the DGIF spend months and sometimes years developing the basic regulations that govern the way wildlife is managed in the Commonwealth.

A team of biologists, environmental planners and law enforcement officers take all aspects of a particular wildlife species into account when they develop recommendations. These aspects include the biology of the species, such as how they reproduce, as well as their habitat requirements and their population numbers. Once all of the data and analyses are complete, recommendations for a particular regulation are then made to the DGIF Board.

This Board consists of 11 members appointed by the Governor, with one representative selected from each congressional district in the state. The Board meets approximately six times a year to set regulations and policy for the operation of the Department. Proposed regulations are presented at public meetings so that anyone who has an interest in them is able to voice their opinion. Once the discussion is complete, the Board votes on the regulation and sets a date for when it will take effect if it passed.

Laws, regulations and permit conditions are enforced by game wardens in the Law Enforcement Division of the DGIF. Like a state trooper, a warden can write tickets, take people into custody, and can issue summons to appear in court if a person breaks either a law or a regulation.

Laws and regulations are written in the best interests of Virginia’s wildlife and for your safety and well-being. As a citizen, you have the right to participate in this legal process and to comment on laws and regulations both before and after they are enacted.

The Laws in Brief

Being familiar with some basic legal definitions is crucial to a thorough understanding of wildlife laws. [See definitions at right.] The word *take*, for example, legally means *to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, possess or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such*

Definitions: (from §29.1-100 of the Code of Virginia and 4 VAC 15-20-50)

Wild Animal—*any member of the animal kingdom, except domestic animals, including without limitation any native, naturalized, or non-native (exotic) mammal, fish, bird, amphibian, reptile, mollusk, crustacean, arthropod or other invertebrate, and includes any hybrid thereof; except as otherwise specified in regulations of the board, or part, product, egg, or offspring thereof; or the dead body or parts of them.* (4 VAC 15-20-50)

Naturalized Animal—*those species and subspecies of animals not originally native to Virginia which have established wild, self-sustaining populations, as included in the department’s 1991 official listing of “Native and Naturalized Fauna of Virginia.”* (4 VAC 15-20-50)

Game Animal—*Game* means wild animals and wild birds that are commonly hunted for sport or food. Game animal means deer, bear, rabbit, fox, squirrel, bobcat and raccoon. (§29.1-100 of the Code of Virginia)

Native Animal—*those species and subspecies of animals naturally occurring in Virginia, as included in the department’s 1991 official listing of “Native and Naturalized Fauna of Virginia.”* (4 VAC 15-20-50)

Domestic Animal—This term is commonly accepted to mean animals which humans have tamed in captivity or bred for particular genetic traits. Although all domestic animals at one time had their origin in wild species, they no longer share those distinguishing “wild” traits. *The following animals are defined as domestic animals* (4 VAC 15-20-50):

Domestic - dog (including wolf hybrids); cat (including hybrids with wild felines); horse (including hybrids with Equus asinus); ass/burro/donkey; cattle; sheep; goat; swine (including pot-bellied pig).

Domesticated races of - hamsters; mink; red fox (where their coat color can be distinguished from wild red fox); guinea pigs; gerbils; chinchillas; rats; mice; European rabbit; chickens; turkeys; ducks and geese distinguishable morphologically from wild birds; pigeons (and feral pigeons); guinea fowl; peafowl.

Also, llama, alpaca, and camels are designated domestic under this law.

Exotic Animal—*The term non-native (exotic) animal means those species and subspecies of animals not naturally occurring in Virginia, excluding domestic and naturalized species.* (4 VAC 15-20-50)

Game Fish—*means trout (including all Salmonidae), all of the sunfish family (including largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and spotted bass, rock bass, bream, bluegill and crappie), walleye or pike perch, white bass, chain pickerel or jackfish, muskellunge, and northern pike, wherever such fish are found in the waters of this Commonwealth and rockfish or striped bass where found above tidewaters or in streams which are blocked from access from tidewaters by dams (§ 29.1-100) except those species that may be listed as Threatened or Endangered.*

Fur-Bearing Animals—*includes beaver, bobcat, fox, mink, muskrat, opossum, otter, raccoon, skunk, and weasel* (§29.1-100 of the Code of Virginia).

conduct (4 VAC 15-20-140). The word *person* means any individual, firm, corporation, association, or partnership (4 VAC 15-20-140). Possession is the exercise of control of any wild animal, wild bird, fish or fur-bearing animal, or any part of the carcass thereof (29.1-100).

Such definitions are very specific so as to minimize inaccurate or deliberately misleading interpretations of the law. In this way, the original intent of the law is less likely to be distorted or misconstrued.

Know This Law!

Perhaps the most important regulation to be aware of is fairly short and sweet: *Under authority of 29.1-103 and 29.1-521 of the Code of Virginia it shall be unlawful to take, possess, import, cause to be imported, export, cause to be exported, buy, sell, offer for sale, or liberate within the Commonwealth any wild animal unless otherwise specifically permitted by law or regulation* (4 VAC 15-30-10). In other words, unless a particular wildlife activity, purpose, or use is specifically authorized by law, you can assume it's illegal. It is up to you to find out whether or not the activity is authorized!

Collecting Live Aquatic Invertebrates, Amphibians, Reptiles, and Nongame Fish

Virginia law specifies how many and what type of wild animals you can legally collect and/or have in your possession at any given time. The following *personal possession limits* do not require a permit but instead are purposefully designed to discourage wildlife collecting so that existing levels of wildlife populations will not be jeopardized. According to 4 VAC 15-360-10:

It shall be lawful to capture and possess live for private use and not for sale (excluding threatened and endangered species provided for in 4 VAC 15-20-130)

- no more than five individuals of any single native or naturalized (as defined in 4 VAC 15-20-50) species of amphibian and reptile and

- 20 individuals of any single native or naturalized (as defined in 4 VAC 15-20-50) species of aquatic invertebrate and nongame fish....

- ... The following species may be taken in unlimited numbers from inland waters statewide: carp, bowfin, longnose gar, mullet, bullhead catfish, suckers, gizzard shad, blueback herring, white perch, yellow perch, alewife, stoneroller (hornyhead), fathead minnow, golden shiner and goldfish....

- ... 'fish bait' shall be defined as native or naturalized species of minnows and chubs (Cyprinidae), salamanders, crayfish, and hellgrammites. The possession limit for taking fish bait shall be 50 individuals in aggregate, unless said person has purchased 'fish bait' and has a receipt specifying the number of individuals purchased by species....

- ... The daily limit for bullfrogs and snapping turtles shall be 15....

The above quotations are only excerpts of a lengthy regulation. In addition to the above, this regulation details what methods are allowed for collecting the animals and what areas of the state are restricted from taking mollusks or salamanders.

Albino reptiles and albino amphibians or those domestic animals as defined in 4 VAC 15-20-50 (4 VAC 15-30-30) can be possessed live in any number without a permit.

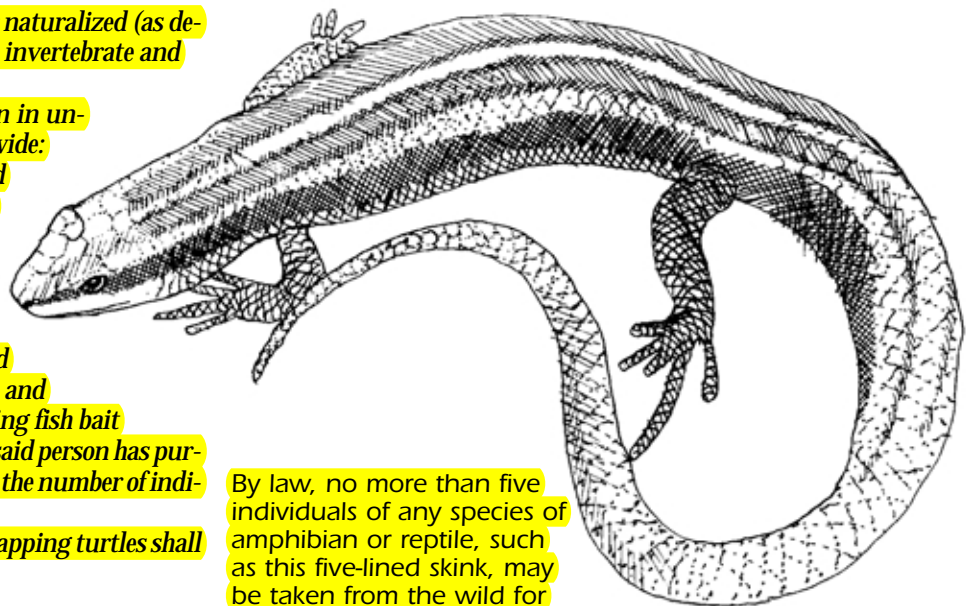
What This Means to the Educator...

Note that the above possession limits are given for *private use*, and they address the collection of *live* animals only (hunting is a completely different issue). The regulation is interpreted by game officials to mean wildlife that you collect live and bring home to keep, either for a short period of time or indefinitely. If you are an educator and choose to bring the live animal(s) into your school or classroom for educational purposes, as an individual you can only have the limit specified by law.

So, for example, a teacher may collect five live tadpoles for "private use" and choose to keep them in his/her possession in a classroom setting. However, each student in the class cannot bring in five tadpoles and leave them with the teacher as a "classroom collection," because the teacher would then be holding or "possessing" more than the five legally allowed to him/her for private use.

To carry this example further, each child in the class could only have five tadpoles apiece if the animals would stay in the children's possession and would be taken back home at the end of the day (i.e. for their "private use").

A prudent educator who understands that the intent of this law is to protect wildlife populations by controlling widespread collection will teach students to leave wildlife in its natural setting. Instilling an ethic of respect that encourages patient observation of wildlife in the environment and discourages collecting animals as neat "pets" is one of the challenges educators face in the 21st century.



By law, no more than five individuals of any species of amphibian or reptile, such as this five-lined skink, may be taken from the wild for one's "private use."

Collecting Live Invertebrates, Mammals, and Birds

Invertebrates

The regulations governing our smaller critters such as insects are much more lenient: *Earthworms may be taken at any time for private or commercial use (4 VAC 15-20-180). Also, except as otherwise provided for in 3.1-1020 through 3.1-1030 and 29.1-418 of the Code of Virginia and in 4 VAC 15-20-130, 4 VAC 15-30-10 et seq. and 4 VAC 15-360-10 invertebrates, other than those listed as endangered or threatened, may be taken for private use (4 VAC 15-20-180).*

Mammals

In general, you cannot capture or collect live mammals or birds in Virginia for any purpose except under limited situations with a special permit. This includes the errant raccoon or squirrel in your attic! Please review the language of 4 VAC 15-30-10 listed under the "Know This Law" section.

Also remember that it is *unlawful to take, possess, transport or sell all other wildlife species not classified as game, furbearer or nuisance, or otherwise specifically permitted by law or regulation (4 VAC 15-20-160).*

Birds, Feathers, and Nests

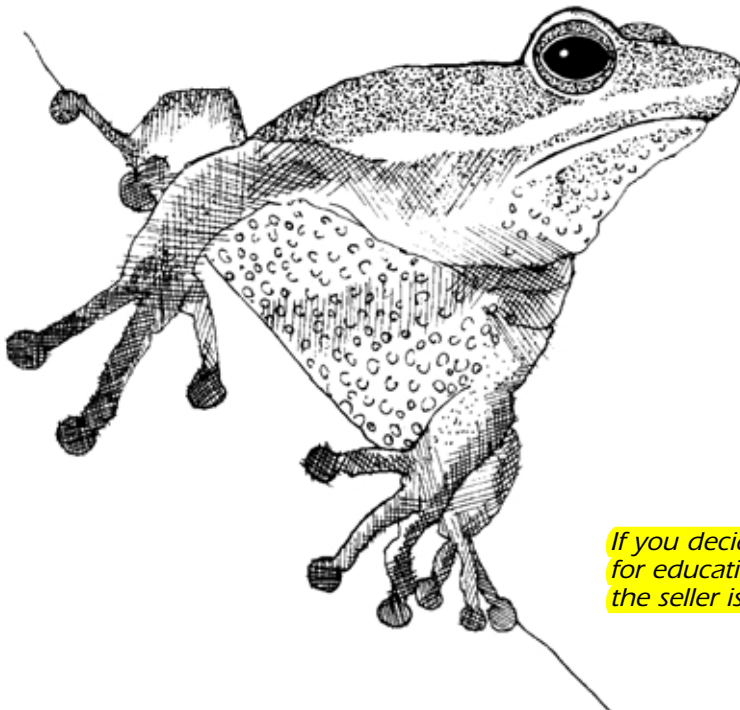
There is no provision in the Code of Virginia to live collect and/or possess wild birds except under an appropriate permit or license or as directly specified by law. *Migratory game birds* (doves, ducks, brant, geese, swan, coot, gallinules, sora and other rails, snipe and woodcock) as defined in § 29.1-100 of the Code of Virginia and *non-migratory game birds* (grouse, pheasant, bobwhite quail, and turkey) as defined in §29.1-100 of the Code of Virginia can only be taken with a valid Virginia hunting license in accordance with wildlife regulations. Also, hunting any waterfowl requires a federal Migratory Waterfowl Stamp ("Duck Stamp") in addition to the hunting license.

Most other birds for which Federal hunting regulations have not been set and which are not officially listed

Things to Remember

Do...

- * Keep records of any animal purchase or any animal specimen donated to your school.
- * Teach our students not to collect wild animals or other wildlife-related specimens such as feathers, nests, bones, etc. Encourage them to observe wildlife in its natural setting and keep a journal of what they see.
- * Call the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for more specific information about wildlife laws that are not covered in this article.

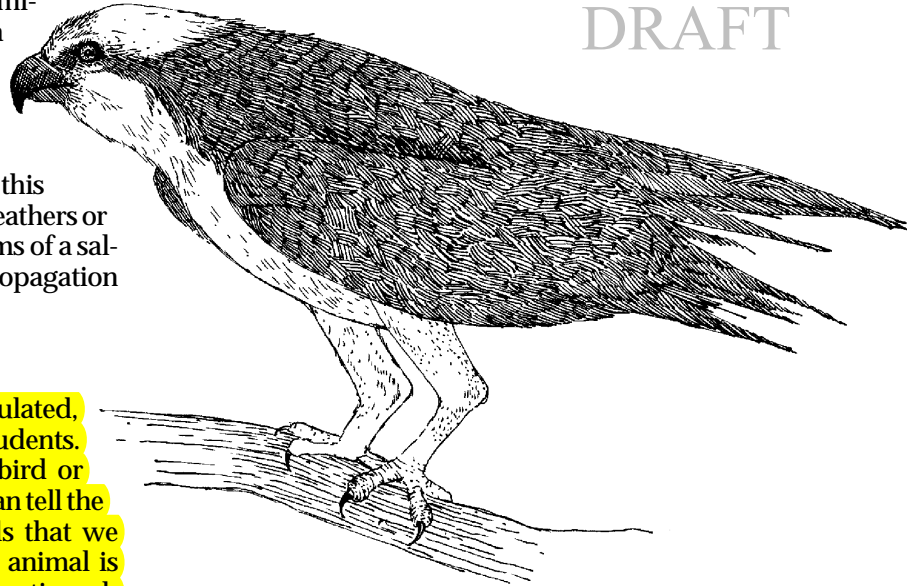


Don't...

- * Collect or buy any animal that occurs naturally in Virginia without knowing the law! Call your county Game Warden.
- * Buy wild animals from other states unless they have been legally collected or propagated according to the laws of that state.
- * Release any captive animals to the wild. This is neither healthy for the individual animals released, nor for the environment they're released to.

If you decide to purchase an animal that is native to Virginia for educational or research purposes, be sure to check that the seller is authorized to do so and has the proper permits.

by state law as a migratory game bird, a non-migratory game bird, a nuisance species, or a threatened or endangered species are federally regulated and protected under the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the federal agency which administers the provisions of this Act. The Act also prohibits collecting any bird feathers or nests unless specifically allowed under the terms of a salvage permit, a falconry permit or a raptor propagation permit.



Osprey are but one of the many nongame bird species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

What This Means to the Educator...

Since birds and mammals are carefully regulated, it is important to explain these laws to your students. If, for example, a student brings in a baby bird or mammal to school, there are a few things you can tell the student. First, the majority of young animals that we think are orphaned really are not: the parent animal is usually close by or well aware of the young's location, although it is not often apparent to us. Second, let them know that even though they may be "just trying to help," the laws were made for all people to follow and to protect wildlife from improper collection.

Third, as soon as you take in a wild animal, you have interfered with its ability to survive on its own. The longer a wild animal is kept in captivity, the more difficult it will be for that animal to readjust back in its natural setting if it is released.

If a student does bring in an injured bird or animal, instruct the student to take that animal to a *licensed wildlife rehabilitator or veterinarian* who has the proper training and facilities to treat and care for it.

A Note About Releasing Animals

Once an animal has been kept in captivity for any length of time, its chances of surviving when released into the wild are very nominal. This is because the time that it takes for the animal to adjust successfully to its new environment is longer than the time it takes to be preyed upon by a predator, succumb to disease, or die of starvation or thirst.

Also, because of the nature of captivity (close quarters, for example, or inadequate hygiene), captive animals are more likely to contract diseases that their wild counterparts may not have been exposed to. Hence, when the captive animal is released, it may introduce disease to the wild population that could impact the latter's numbers.

There is also a genetic issue when one considers captive-bred animals. Animals which have been crossed and re-crossed with different gene pools and have been bred for new characteristics no longer represent the gene pool of the wild population that they originally came from. There is therefore a concern for the potential negative environmental impacts of a release.

Similarly, picking up a wild animal like a box turtle in

one part of the state while on vacation and releasing it in your backyard in another part of the state introduces new genes to the turtle population that evolved in your area. Although the effect of this example may seem insignificant, it is the cumulative effect of our actions over the centuries that have such a great impact on our wildlife populations, often with irreversible results.

Because of all these reasons, it is unlawful to *liberate within the Commonwealth any wild animal unless otherwise specifically permitted by law or regulation* (4 VAC 15-30-10). Also, although exotic animals not classified as predatory, threatened/endangered, or undesirable may be possessed and sold, they shall not be liberated within the Commonwealth (4 VAC 15-30-40F). In addition, any *birds or animals otherwise classed as predatory or undesirable, may not be imported into the Commonwealth or liberated therein, except under a special permit* (4 VAC 15-30-20).

What This Means to the Educator ...

Since we know from the above law that you cannot legally release any animal into the wild, it should be clear that any animal you buy or legally collect live **must remain in captivity for the rest of its life**. Therefore, you should not acquire any animal unless you are prepared to care for it the rest of its life or to make future arrangements for its care.

If, for example, you have been legally holding a native wild animal in your possession for several months and you decide you no longer wish to keep it, you might give the animal away to another permitted or licensed person or institution who will take care of it, with the understanding that they will not release it. A local veterinarian or the Permits and Lifetime License Section of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries may also suggest other options (see last page for more information).

Buying and/or Selling Wildlife

Buying and/or selling wildlife in Virginia is also strictly regulated. In general, it is unlawful to buy or sell *any wild bird or wild animal or the carcass or any part thereof; except as specifically permitted by law* (29.1-521). Here are some other regulations and guidelines regarding buying and selling:

- Game fish are only sold under certain conditions, namely for the purpose of *stocking private waters* (such as a pond or lake), *for stocking public waters (but only with approval from the DGIF)*, and *for human consumption* (4 VAC 15-320-40). This regulation is not intended to allow the sale of game fish for display in an aquarium. A school teacher or other individual may possess and display game fish in an aquarium provided that they hold a valid fishing license **and** provided that the fish were legally obtained by an individual possessing a valid fishing license.

- Minnows and chubs can be purchased for any purpose, as well as crayfish and hellgrammites, provided they are purchased from a dealer who is authorized by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to collect, hold, and sell them (4 VAC 15-360-20; 4 VAC 15-360-30).

- The Game Department is now issuing permits to licensed pet stores and captive breeders for them to sell three species of captive-bred snakes (4 VAC 15-360-50): eastern kingsnake, mole kingsnake, and corn snake. **No other snakes native to Virginia can be bought or sold in Virginia, and there are size limits as to what can be sold.**

- No threatened or endangered species may be bought or sold for any purposes at any time, whether dead or alive, including their parts.

- Because the Lacey Act restricts the interstate transport of birds and other animals, federal laws prohibit moving fish and wildlife into the state if they were illegally taken elsewhere. Therefore, if you make a wildlife pur-

chase from an out-of-state supplier, the species must have been legally collected, propagated, and/or sold according to the laws of that state.

- The *bullfrog, green frog, southern leopard frog, and green tree frog* can only be bought for educational or research purposes if they are purchased from a permitted captive breeder in Virginia or from a properly permitted business out-of-state (4 VAC 15-360-50).

- *When taken in accordance with the provisions of law or regulation, muskrat, opossum, rabbits, raccoon and squirrels may be bought and sold during the open hunting season only, but the hides, furs or pelts of fur-bearing animals legally taken and possessed, and the carcass of any fur-bearing animal may be sold at any time....* (29.1- 536)

Nuisance Species

The following 12 animals are officially considered nuisance species in Virginia and may be taken (harvested) at any time without a collector's permit (4 VAC 15-20-160):

- House mouse
- Norway rat
- Black rat
- Coyote
- Sika deer
- Feral hog
- Nutria
- Woodchuck
- European starling
- English (house) sparrow
- Pigeon (rock dove)
- Mute swan

Historically, many of these animals were associated with significant economic concerns or health problems, and over time became viewed as "nuisances."

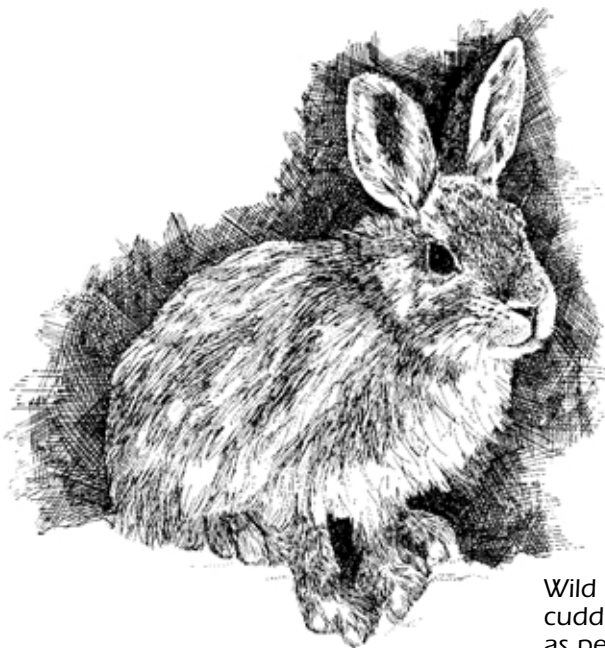
It is also *lawful to take striped skunks* (*Mephitis mephitis*) *at any time* (4 VAC 15-220-10), although this species is not technically part of the nuisance list.

For further information on this topic of what, when and how nuisance animals may be taken, please contact the Permits and Lifetime License Section.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Currently, there are a little over 100 wildlife species that are officially listed as threatened or endangered in Virginia, and over 900 worldwide ranging from millipedes to whales. Some of these species are considered "federal endangered," while others are "state endangered."

Over 50 additional species are now being considered as federal candidates for the list. While the list is too long



Wild mammals may appear cute and cuddly, but it is illegal to collect them as pets.

to include here, it is available on request and should be consulted before conducting any wildlife collecting activities. (See the section “Official Listings Available.”) Under the provisions of the law, *it shall be unlawful to take, transport, process, sell or offer for sale within the Commonwealth any threatened or endangered species of fish or wildlife* (4 VAC 15-20-130).

Exotics

There are additional requirements regarding exotic or non-native species which are animals that do not occur naturally in Virginia. Biologists view non-native species with caution because these animals can cause irreparable harm to a habitat and/or an entire population of native species. Some examples of prior introductions that easily come to mind are the English house sparrow, the European starling, the gypsy moth, and more recently, the zebra mussel.

Educators should be particularly aware when ordering lab specimens from mail order catalogs that availability from a catalog does not necessarily mean that you can lawfully possess that animal in Virginia. For example, the marine toad, African clawed frog and piranha may be popular catalog items, but they are included as predatory and undesirable in VAC 15-30-40.

When a non-native or exotic species is introduced to a new environment, it competes with native species that were previously well-adapted to the way things were. The non-native population therefore creates additional pressure on the native wildlife population by introducing new diseases and by competing for suitable nest sites, food, and other habitat requirements.

In addition, the non-native species may now be living in a new ecosystem where its natural predators do not occur to keep its population in check. The net result is often that native species have difficulty adapting and competing, and their numbers subsequently decrease.

Importation laws and multi-state policies protect against such introductions of non-native species. A special permit is required to import, possess, or sell a whole range of exotic species that are classed as *predatory or undesirable within the meaning and intent of Title 29.1-542 of the Code of Virginia, in that their introduction into the Commonwealth will be detrimental to the native fish and wildlife resources of Virginia* (4 VAC 15-30-40).

Using This Information in the Classroom

There are several Project WILD activities you can use to help teach about the legislative process. Project WILD is a supplementary wildlife curriculum for teachers of students in grades K-12. The curriculum guide is only available by attending a free six-hour workshop sponsored by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (call the WILD Coordinator for more details at 804/367-0188).

“Wild Bill’s Fate” gives students an opportunity to compare the different viewpoints that people have about pending wildlife legislation. “Know Your Legislation: What’s in it for Wildlife?” carries the process further by guiding students in selecting a piece of current wildlife legislation that they’re interested in and getting in touch with elected officials to express their views.

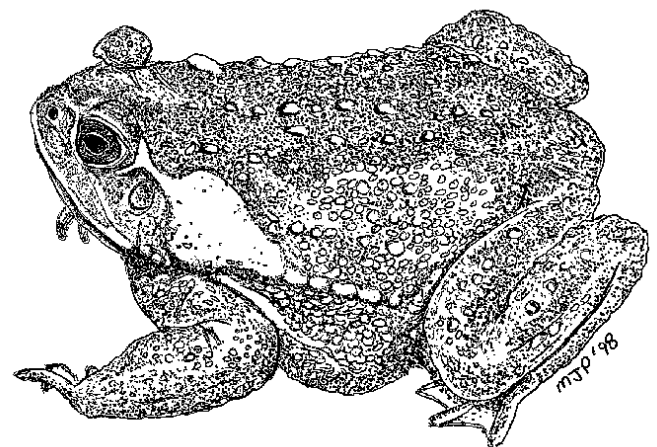
Another approach is to try the “Cabin Conflict” activity in which students set up their classroom as a courtroom and role-play various points of view of a land-use issue that affects wildlife. “To Zone or Not to Zone” is a similar activity that illustrates the complexities of land-use planning and decisions that must consider differing viewpoints.

Students might even be encouraged to write their own proposal or bill about a wildlife issue and submit it to their General Assembly representative. Or, have a local elected official visit your school and talk with the students about a local issue.

Although the above activities are geared towards upper grade level students, lower grade level students might also explore their opinions on a simple issue that concerns their local community, as in the activity “Changing Attitudes.” Students might interview parents and friends and record their different thoughts and views in a journal-writing activity. They could follow this up with some research in local newspapers and the library to find out more about both sides of the issue, then write what their conclusion is about the matter.

Types of Permits

Although the regulations are rigid and all-encompassing, teachers and other educators do have a few avenues open to them if they are serious about wildlife conservation but still want to bring wildlife into their schools for educational purposes. The following permits are those that the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries may issue. Applications, instructions, and re-



The marine toad is an exotic species that is considered predatory and undesirable; it is illegal to order this species from a catalog and possess it in Virginia. Illustration by Mike Pinder.

porting forms may be downloaded from www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/scp.html.

- **Scientific Collection Permit:** for research or educational purposes. This permit allows you to collect live animals from the wild and possess them for scientific or educational purposes. You will need an **additional federal permit** from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in order to perform research on birds. You will be required to report each year what was collected, where it was collected, etc., or the permit will not be renewed.

- **Salvage Permit:** for research or educational purposes. This permit allows you to collect dead animals or parts and parts for scientific or educational purposes. You will need an additional federal permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in order to collect dead birds, bird parts, feathers, or nests. You will be required to report each year what was collected, where it was collected, etc., or the permit will not be renewed.

- **Exhibitor's Permit:** for educational or scientific use to hold and display more than your legal personal use limit. This applies to game fish, birds, mammals, and more than your legal limit of non-game fish, amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic invertebrates. Nature centers and parks which do not charge a fee typically fall under this category, as might a school system which is planning several exhibits in an environmental education facility.

There are fees associated with these permits. Please call the number at the end of this article and ask for the Permits and Lifetime License Section.

Official Listings Available

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has a web-based, computerized system of databases, the Virginia Fish and Wildlife Information System (VAFWIS) that provides users with information about wildlife in the Commonwealth. This may be accessed through the Department web page at www.dgif.virginia.gov by choosing "Wildlife," then "Wildlife Information and Mapping Services," and finally "Virginia Fish and Wildlife Information Services."

Complete listings of all native and naturalized species, threatened and endangered species, and species of special concern are also available from the "Wildlife" page by selecting "Virginia's Wildlife."

For More Information

- Main Agency phone number (804) 367-1000.
- Exhibitor's permit: Permits and Lifetime License Section (804) 367-1076
- Scientific collection, salvage, or threatened and endangered species permits, and issues regarding nongame wildlife: Wildlife Diversity Division, (804) 367-6913.
- Game mammals: Wildlife Division (804) 367-0904
- Game fish: Fisheries Division (804) 367-0509
- Violations, licenses, and the law: Law Enforcement Division (804) 367-0776
- Federal laws and permits: Northeast Region of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (413) 253-8643.
- Wildlife Crime Line: 1-800-237-5712 or e-mail WildlifeCrime@dgif.state.va.us.
- To view the complete wildlife laws in the Code of Virginia, go to the web site of the Virginia General Assembly at www.legis.state.va.us and click on "Code of Virginia." Then click on "Table of Contents" and scroll down to "Title 29.1—Game, Inland Fisheries and Boating."

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