2024-2025
Walking Softer Education
2 - Rewilding

Rewilding

Learning Outcomes

- Define rewilding
- Discover connections between biodiversity and climate
- Understand the benefit of biodiversity
- Examine local biodiversity

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Agenda

- Defining biodiversity and rewilding.
- Examine and discuss how biodiversity impacts the environment.
- Participate in a BioBlitz in your own community!

Defining Biodiversity

Why is biodiversity so important? - Kim Preshoff

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GK_vRtHJZu4

Defining Rewilding

Rewilding is the process of restoring and protecting natural ecosystems, and allowing them to develop and function without human intervention. This can include the reintroduction of native species, the removal of non-native species, and the protection of natural processes such as fire and flooding. The goal of rewilding is to create self-sustaining ecosystems that can support a diverse array of plant and animal life.

Rewilding can come in many forms!

Defining Biodiversity and Rewilding

Discussion questions:

- **How does rewilding relate to biodiversity?**
- **How does rewilding an area help to increase the number of different plants and animals that live there?**
- How might rewilding conflict with other ways humans use the land?
- How can we measure the success of rewilding efforts in enhancing biodiversity?

Environmental Impacts

Everything on earth is connected and part of the earth “system” in some way. In systems, if you change one particular variable, that also affects other variables in the system as well.

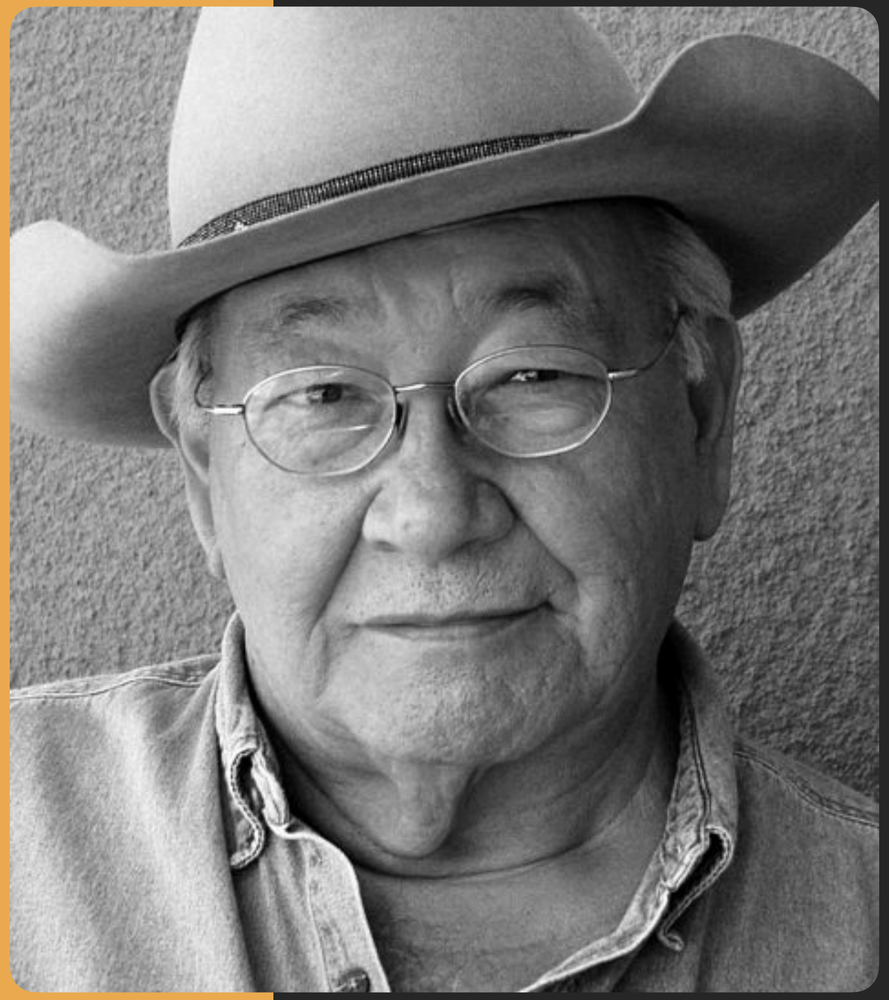
Why Should Humans Care About Biodiversity? (4 mins)

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/videos/why-should-humans-care-about-biodiversity-loss/

Environmental Impacts

Discussion questions:

- How does the destruction of native biodiversity negatively impact the environment? *(Hint: think about what we talked about previously: ecosystem services, systems, and interconnectedness)*
- How does our current economic, social, and cultural system view our relationship to nature?
- How could habitat restoration conflict with existing development or plans for future development?
- Why might some people or businesses be hesitant about the idea of rewilding? What are some of their potential concerns?



“When we dance the earth trembles. When our steps fall on the earth we feel the shudder of life beneath us, and the earth feels the beating of our hearts, and we become one with the earth. We shall not sever ourselves from the earth. We must chant our being, and we must dance in time with the rhythms of the earth. We must keep the earth.”

— N. Scott Momaday, **Earth Keeper: Reflections on the American Land**

- **What does N. Scott Momaday mean by this?**
- **How does hearing this quote make you feel?**

BioBlitz

- Next, we are going to participate in a BioBlitz! To participate in a BioBlitz, we are going to:
  - Get into groups, go outside, and explore the biodiversity of our “region,” with the region being the surrounding area. The area could be the built environment around the school, the schoolyard, or a nearby park.
  - Try to observe as many different species of life as possible- including animals, plants, and fungi (such as mushrooms).
  - Record the different species we find by writing them down
    - Try to tally how many species we find throughout the BioBlitz activity.
    - Write down as specifically as you can what the species is, i.e. “bird”, or “grass”, but correctly identifying the type of species is not essential for today.
    - You can also make up names for the different species if you don’t know them. For example, if you’re looking at three different species of moss, you could call them “rock moss,” “troll moss,” and “fuzzy moss.”
- By doing this, you are collecting data. Today, the data happens to be about the biodiversity in this region, and that’s actually something other scientists and naturalists are constantly collecting data on as well. This type of activity, in which anyone can collect data to share with the wider scientific community, is called “citizen science.”
- Citizen science is an excellent way that everyone can participate in the scientific process of observing, collecting data, and then entering/sharing that data. There are many different ways to participate in citizen science.

BioBlitz Discussion

- **Was anyone surprised at how many different species you observed?**
- Was it higher or lower than you'd expect?
- Do you think it would have been higher or lower 200 years ago?
- **What do you think could make the number of species observed higher?**
- Where else would you want to do a BioBlitz?
- **What parts of the world do you think would have a lot of species if you did a BioBlitz there? Why?**
- What makes the results vary?
- How can we use these tallies to track trends over time?
- How could we improve the accuracy of our surveys?

Additional Resources

- **Why is biodiversity important - with Sir David Attenborough | The Royal Society**: David Attenborough explains why biodiversity is so important to humans, how biodiversity loss is impacting our world and how there is still time to change direction
- **Rewilding – What are the benefits?**: University of Sussex - Hear what benefits young people think rewilding delivers. It varies from helping to restore biodiversity to helping us have a better relationship with nature.
- **50 Years Ago, This Was a Wasteland. He Changed Everything | Short Film Showcase**: National Geographic - Bamberger's model of land stewardship is now being replicated across the region and he is considered to be a visionary in land management and water conservation.
- **WWF's 2022 Living Planet Report**: World Wildlife Fund - The 2022 Living Planet Report is a comprehensive study of trends in global biodiversity and the health of the planet.
- **What is a BioBlitz? #nhmla #Community #Science**: National History Museum of LA - Watch as NHM's Community Science team kicked off the 2023 City Nature Challenge with a BioBlitz in Whittier, California.

Contributors

Walking Softer would like to thank Mackenzie Feldman and Sheina Crystal of Re:Wild Your Campus, and Morgan Graham for contributing to the rewilding learning materials.

re:wild your campus