



Wildlife Yoga

OVERVIEW

Yoga is a great activity for all ages—it provides physical exercise and it can be low-impact for people with injuries or limitations. It also encourages mindfulness as participants become aware of how they move different parts of their body. We've outlined several poses for students to try. There are also some optional discussion questions aimed at younger audiences.

This activity was adapted from Bird Yoga, created by Carolyn Byers for the Madison Audubon Society.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Yoga can be used as a tool to calm the body and the mind
- We are connected to the wildlife around us and we share many similarities with them. We can imitate movement that we notice in nature for our own relaxation
- Each species has a different range of motion relating to their anatomy

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Practice relaxation and mindfulness techniques
- Notice similarities between themselves and Wisconsin wildlife species

KEY TERMS

Yoga, mindfulness, movement, Wisconsin wildlife

TIME REQUIREMENTS

Each pose takes 30 seconds-1 minute. You can go through as many or as few as you have time for.

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE

This activity is great for all ages. The optional discussion questions are aimed at grades K-5, but could be adapted for any level of ecology class.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

No prior knowledge or yoga experience is necessary!

MATERIALS

- Only one sheet with the following yoga poses is needed if the instructor plans to read each of the poses out loud. Alternatively, each student could have a print-out of the poses and go at their own pace or work in groups.
- If you would like to practice these poses outside, a towel might come in handy to prevent clothes from getting dirty while on the ground.

TEACHING TIPS

- Encourage students to take deep breaths as they move through each pose.
- It's important to know that everyone will have slightly different variations of each pose and adding your own movement or embellishments are encouraged!
- If the weather is nice, this activity works well outside in any flat or grassy area (keep in mind they will be kneeling/laying on the ground for some poses).

PROCEDURE

1. Go through each of the poses below.
2. If you would like to add a discussion onto the end of the activity, some suggestions are outlined below. You can also come up with your own questions!

Downward Coyote

Start on your hands and knees with your wrists aligned under your shoulders. Curl under your toes and lift your hips up and back until you are standing on the balls of your feet with your hands firmly planted on the ground. Continue to push into the ground and reach backwards like a stretching coyote.



Bobcat Marching in the Snow

Start on your hands and knees with your wrists aligned under your shoulders. Slowly stretch out your left hand in front of you and your right leg behind you. Keep reaching to stretch out opposite sides of your body. Return your hand and knee to the floor and stretch out your other hand and foot.





Wildlife Yoga

Flying Sandhill Crane

Stand up straight with your feet firmly planted on the ground. Slowly lift up one of your legs so that your knee is bent into a right-angle. Hold your arms out to the sides for balance. Slowly lean forward and push your lifted leg straight out behind you. After a few seconds, straighten back up, return your leg to the ground, and repeat on the other side.



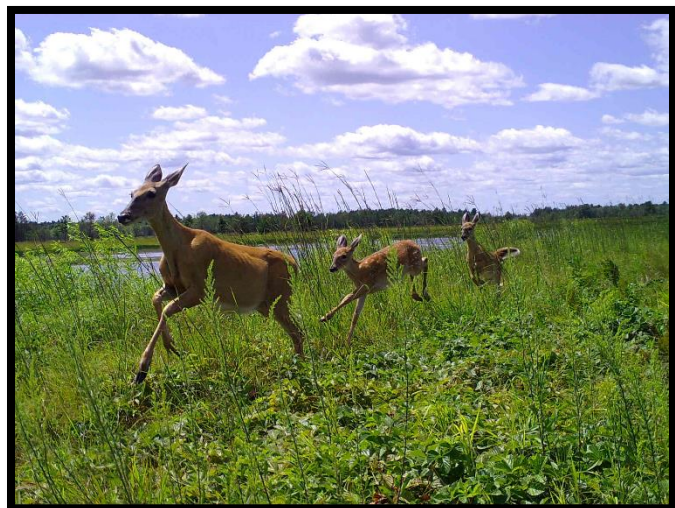
Startled Turkey

Stand up tall and stretch your arms out to the sides. Take a long deep breath into your belly while slowly raising your hands over your head. Touch your palms together overhead and exhale.



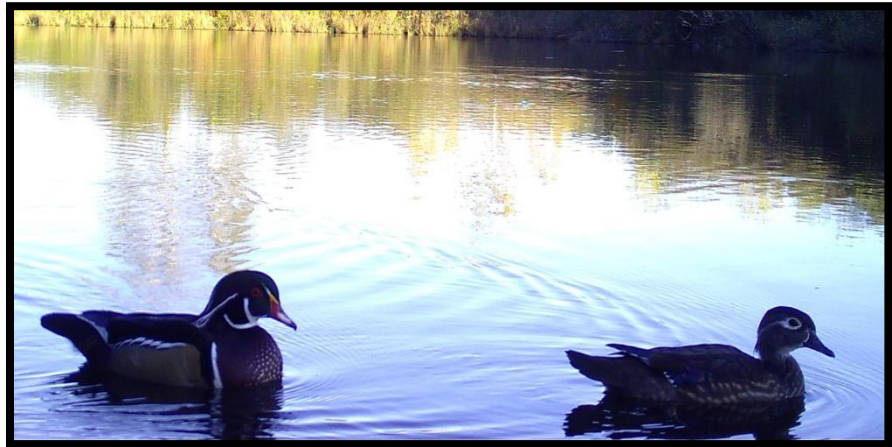
Leaping Deer

Stand up tall and stretch your arms straight overhead. Spread your fingers wide like antlers. Keeping your arms extended, slowly bring your arms out in front of you, and then bend over and touch the floor (you can bend your knees as much as you need to).



Floating Wood Duck

Lay flat on your stomach with your hands near your shoulders. Use your back muscles to lift your chest a few inches off the ground. Hold for 5 seconds, then lower back down.



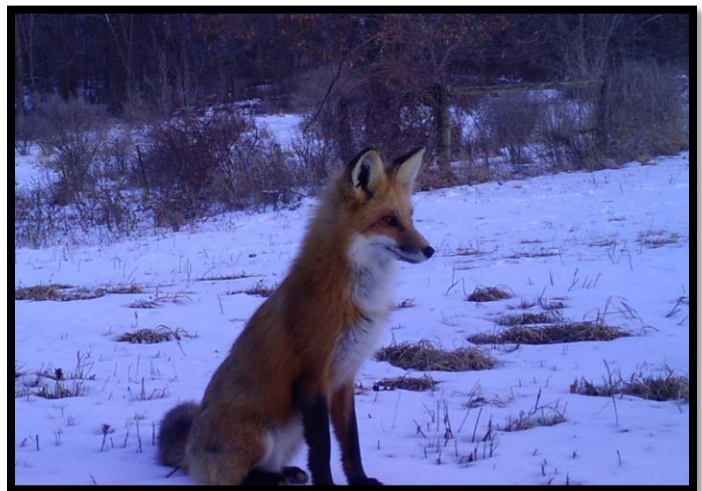
Playful Otter

Lay flat on your back. Hug your knees to your chest and rock side to side. Straighten your legs back out on the ground, raise your arms overhead and rest them on the ground as well. Then, grab your left wrist with your right hand. Staying flat on the ground, slowly arch to your left in a crescent shape to stretch out your right side. Come back to the center and repeat on your other side.



Sitting Fox

Sit down cross-legged on the ground. Rest your hands comfortably on your knees. Take three long, deep breaths. Notice what is around you. What sounds do you hear? What scents can you smell?





Wildlife Yoga

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did you feel as you moved through each pose? Which ones were difficult, which ones were easy?
2. Which animals were bipedal (two-legged) and which were quadrupedal (four-legged)?
3. What are some similarities between us and some of the wildlife that we practiced posing as? (These could be physical, behavioral, etc.)
4. What are some other wildlife poses you could invent?