



Crittercam Educator Activities

What Is Crittercam?



SCIENCE STANDARDS C, E, G

Students decide what animal they want to study using Crittercam, and write a proposal to the National Geographic Society.

Background:

Crittercam is a scientific research tool used to study the behavior of wild animals—from *the animals'* point of view. Scientists see what the animals see and hear what the animals hear. They find out where the animals go and their daily habits. With Crittercam, there's always an element of surprise.

Since 1989, when the first Crittercam was deployed on a nesting leatherback turtle by its inventor, Greg Marshall and his team of researchers, it has been used on more than 60 species. Its capabilities have been improved, and the latest models record up to 10 hours of video. Crittercam has been adapted for animals as small as a house cat and as large as a blue whale. Depending on the animal, it may be attached by suction cups, tethers, clamps, adhesive, or a harness.

The goal of Crittercam is to better understand the needs of wild animals so we can work to protect and conserve them.

ACTIVITY

Crittercam Proposal

1. Discuss the goals of Crittercam, and various reasons for selecting certain animals for deployment—e.g., conservation status, inaccessible habitat, animals too dangerous to follow, lack of knowledge about how they live or what they eat.
2. Ask students to consider this question: If you could deploy Crittercam on any animal in the world, what would it be? Why?
3. Each student selects an animal, researches it, and writes a Crittercam proposal using the Crittercam Proposal Form.
4. You can send your students' proposals to the following address:

Greg Marshall and the Crittercam Team
National Geographic Society
1145 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1 Language Arts:

Books About Critters and Conservation

Arctic Tale, (Junior Novelization), by Barry Varela—fiction

Publisher: National Geographic

Grades: 4 - 7

Meet Nanu, a polar bear, and Seela, a walrus, both babies born in the Arctic. Learn about their lives and the environmental conditions in the Arctic in this companion book to the film *Arctic Tale*.

Learning About Ocean Animals—nonfiction

Publisher: National Geographic

Grades: 3 - 7

Get a glimpse into the daily lives of ocean animals with Greg Marshall and his Crittercam. Learn how technology has helped scientists learn about the behavior of many kinds of ocean animals.

Global Warming—nonfiction

Publisher: National Geographic

Grades: 6 - 8

Discover the science behind global warming—its causes and possible effects. Learn how human activities affect global temperatures and explore the good and bad news about our warming world.

2 Science:

Students design a Crittercam for different species using the activity on the Crittercam website:

www.nationalgeographic.com/crittercam/missions.html

3 Science and Art:

Students follow a local animal (e.g., a squirrel, pigeon or other bird, butterfly or other insect), and look at the world through its eyes. If it were wearing a Crittercam, what would the camera see and record? What body parts play important roles in the animal's behavior? Students record what they observe and what the animal does. They can make quick sketches of what the animal sees or, if they have access to digital cameras (still or video), take photos from the animal's point of view. Students consolidate their observations into a written or visual report. Discuss what discoveries the students made and the challenges of the assignment. What was the biggest surprise?



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Crittercam Proposal

Proposed by: _____ Date: _____

Research animal: _____

Why should Crittercam be deployed on this animal? _____

Where and when would the mission take place? _____

How would Crittercam need to be customized for this animal? How would Crittercam be mounted? How would it be removed?

What challenges do you expect on this mission? _____

What would be the important benefits of this study? _____
