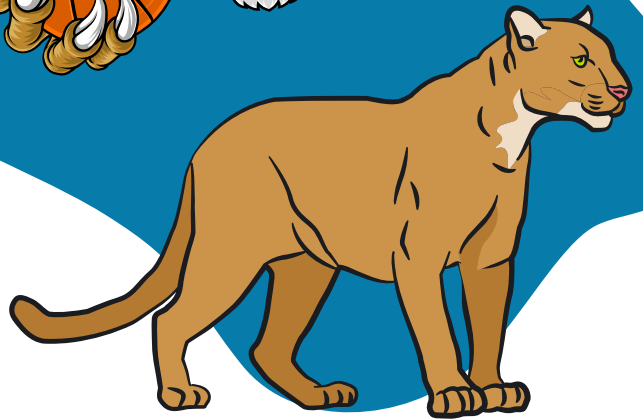


WILDLIFE MASCOTS

**Turn Your School's
Wildlife Mascot into a Tool for
Student-Led Environmental
Learning and Action**



Turn Your School's Wildlife Mascot into a Tool for Student-Led Environmental Learning and Action



Audience: Primary and Secondary Education Institutions

If your school's mascot is a local and native wildlife species to your state or region, take advantage of this opportunity and use your mascot to help educate and engage your students and staff around wildlife and environmental action.

If your school's mascot isn't a local and/or native species, but a wild animal, identify a similar species that lives in your community, state or region. For example, if you live in Virginia, and your school mascot is a grizzly bear, your school could organize around the native black bear to educate and engage your school community. Or if your mascot is a wildcat, choose a wild cat in your region – mountain lion, bobcat, etc.

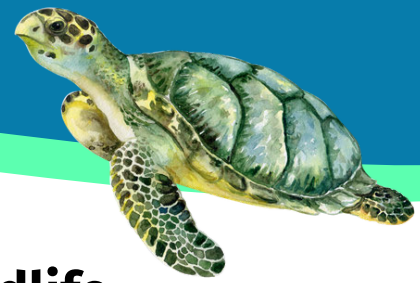
Check out the following resources to find out if your school's wildlife mascot is native to your region, and if it's listed as threatened or endangered:

- [NWF's Wildlife Guide](#)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife \(species search\)](#)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Endangered Species List](#)

Explore ideas and resources to spark learning and action with your school's wildlife mascot. What's included in this resource:

- Six Ideas for Using Your School's Wildlife Mascot to Engage Around Wildlife
- Popular Wildlife Mascots in the U.S.
- Earn Eco-Schools U.S. Certification with Help from Your School's Wildlife Mascot (K-12)
- Help Your Students Build Leadership Skills with Help from Your School's Wildlife Mascot (High School and College Students)





Six Ideas to Use Your School's Wildlife Mascot to Engage Around Wildlife

1. Create or restore habitat at your school.

Guiding Question: What type of habitat does your wildlife mascot or other local and native wildlife species need to survive and thrive?

Resource: [Schoolyard Habitat Program](#) provides a planning guide to create wildlife habitat at school.

2. Clean up litter around your school.

Guiding Question: How does a clean environment, free of trash, help your wildlife mascot or other local and native wildlife species?

Resource: [Clean Earth Challenge](#) provides tips and tools to host a successful outdoor cleanup.

3. Host friendly competition among your students.

Many schools encourage school spirit through organizing the student body in groups or houses and hosting friendly competitions throughout the academic year. Consider naming these groups after your school mascot. For example, if your school mascot is a grizzly bear, consider naming school groups with other bear names (e.g., polar bear, black bear, panda bear, etc.). Another idea is to name school groups after local and native wildlife. Encourage each group to learn about their animal (where they live, what they eat, what threats they are facing, etc.).

4. Share fun facts about your wildlife mascot during morning announcements on a weekly basis. This encourages learning on a regular basis about your wildlife mascot species and local wildlife. The fun facts could be a class or club project to choose the wildlife species and research the facts to share. This helps the school community learn about the mascot's habitat, behaviors, and conservation needs through consistent, bite-sized messaging and provides opportunities for student-led storytelling, fostering a shared culture of environmental stewardship and school pride.

5. Engage your art class or club in designing a school T-shirt featuring your school's wildlife mascot or other local wildlife with a call to action to help, or a fun slogan. The call to action and/or fun slogan could be chosen through a school contest or chosen by a higher grade as a special benefit.

6. Help protect your mascot or other local and native wildlife species through student-led action.

Encourage students to brainstorm actions they can take on a regular basis to protect the school's wildlife mascot or other local and native wildlife species. Some ideas include:

- Bring a reusable water bottle to school to help reduce plastic pollution.
- Implement a food sharing table, placing unwanted packaged food in a designated location to reduce food waste in the landfill.

Popular Wildlife Mascots in the U.S.

- **Eagles**
- **Panthers**
- **Bears**
- **Wolves**
- **Sharks**

Discover fun facts about popular wildlife mascots and challenge students to connect with the leadership traits they inspire.


Bald Eagle

- Bald eagles have a wingspan around 6.5 feet wide.
- Bald eagles love to eat fish! But they will also eat smaller birds and rodents.
- Bald eagles are found in all U.S. states except Hawaii.
- Bald eagles mate for life.

Leadership traits of a bald eagle:

Adaptive, Resilient, Loyal

[Learn more about the bald eagle](#)

 The golden eagle is also native to the U.S.!




Mountain Lion

- Mountain lions are also called pumas, panthers, and cougars.
- Mountain lions live in a variety of ecosystems, including mountains, forests, deserts, and wetlands.
- Mountain lions primarily hunt under the cover of darkness, employing stealth and patience to stalk their prey.
- Mountain lions do not roar like other large cats such as lions or tigers. They growl, hiss, and purr.

Leadership traits of a mountain lion:

Adaptive, Patient, Nurturing

[Learn more about the mountain lion](#)

 Other **wild cats** found in the U.S. include the bobcat, ocelot and the Canada lynx!





Grizzly Bear

- Grizzly bears got their name because their brown fur can be tipped with white, giving them a “grizzled” look.
- Grizzly bears can generally weigh up to 700 pounds.
- Grizzly bears are a subspecies of the brown bear and are listed as threatened, in the lower 48 states, under the Endangered Species Act.
- Grizzly bears are omnivores. Their diet is mostly plant-based (roots, tubers, and berries), however, they will also eat insects, fish, and other mammals.

Leadership traits of a grizzly bear: Adaptive, Resourceful, Strategic Thinker

[Learn more about the grizzly bear](#)



The black bear is also native to the U.S.!



Gray Wolf

- Gray wolves live in packs (groups), most packs have four to nine members.
- Gray wolves are listed as endangered in 44 states and threatened in Minnesota under the Endangered Species Act.
- Gray wolves are the largest wild member of the dog family.
- Gray wolves have complex communication using vocalizations and body language; they howl to gather, signal a warning of danger, and more.

Leadership traits of a gray wolf: Collaborative, Resilient, Skilled Communicator

[Learn more about the gray wolf](#)



The red wolf is also native to the U.S.!



CHOOSE
TO
REUSE



Great White Shark

- Great white sharks are named for their white-colored underside (their backs are dark gray to brown).
- Great white sharks are partially warm-blooded, and they can maintain their internal body temperature above that of the surrounding water - this means they can be a more active predator in cooler waters compared to cold-blooded shark species.
- Great white sharks live an average lifespan is 40-70 years.
- Great white sharks are listed as vulnerable on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

Leadership traits of a great white shark: Adaptive, Curious, Ferocious

Learn more about the great white shark



There are several shark species found in U.S. coastal waters including the scalloped hammerhead, ocean whitetip and the tiger shark!

Earn Eco-Schools U.S. Certification with Help from Your School's Wildlife Mascot

Eco-Schools U.S. is a certification program for K–12 schools that uses a curriculum-linked framework to help schools assess, track, benchmark, and celebrate sustainability and environmental excellence. To earn certification, schools select and implement actions from the Eco-Schools action card library around one of three themes, including Wildlife and Biodiversity. If your school is working toward Eco-Schools certification, consider raising awareness and taking action to support your wildlife mascot or native wildlife as part of your journey. Highlighting threatened and endangered species in your community is strongly encouraged, as these species are vulnerable and need immediate support to recover. Check out the [U.S. Endangered Species List](#) to find out what species are threatened and endangered.

Here are a selection of Eco-Schools Wildlife and Biodiversity themed actions cards that have the opportunity to support learning and action around your school's mascot:

- **Become a “Citizen Scientist”** - an opportunity for schools to focus research on wildlife mascot, or similar native species in the community.
- **Bird-friendly Schools** – an opportunity for schools that have a bird mascot (e.g., cardinal). If your school doesn't have a bird mascot, choose a native bird species to focus on.
- **Build a Pollinator Garden** – an opportunity for schools that have a pollinator mascot (e.g., yellow jacket). If your school doesn't have a pollinator mascot, choose a native pollinator to focus on.
- **Create an Endangered Species Coloring Book** – an opportunity for schools with a wildlife mascot that is threatened or endangered.
- **Create Wildlife Homes**– If your wildlife mascot is not native to your community, this is a great opportunity to focus on similar native species.
- **Endangered Species Community Awareness Event** – an opportunity for schools with a wildlife mascot that is threatened or endangered.
- **Fish Stewards** – an opportunity for schools with a fish mascot (e.g., shark). If your school doesn't have a fish mascot, choose a native fish to focus on.
- **Grow a Schoolyard Forest**- If your wildlife mascot is not native to your community, this is a great opportunity to focus on similar native species.
- **Hosting a Monarch Town Hall** – an opportunity for schools that have a monarch mascot.
- **Species Diversity** – If your wildlife mascot is not native to your community, this is a great opportunity to focus on similar native species.
- **Schoolyard Habitat**- If your wildlife mascot is not native to your community, this is a great opportunity to focus on similar native species.
- **Waterway Cleanup** - If your wildlife mascot is not native to your community, this is a great opportunity to focus on similar native species.

Begin your Eco-Schools U.S. journey now.

Help Students Build Leadership Skills with Help from Your School's Wildlife Mascot

Audience: High School and College Students



NWF EcoLeaders is a leadership and career development program for high school upperclassmen, college students, young professionals, faculty, and administrative advocates for these future leaders.

The EcoLeaders program offers a variety of recognition opportunities for student leaders, including campaign badges. With numerous badges to fit students' interests, the Endangered Species, Wildlife Crossing, and Pollinator campaign badges are great opportunities for students passionate about raising awareness and taking action for their school's wildlife mascot and other wildlife in their community, while building career and leadership skills to share on college applications and with prospective employers.

In addition to the campaign badges, EcoLeaders provides project planning and implementation resources, an extensive green career resource library, and more recognition and certification opportunities.

Begin your EcoLeaders journey now.

TOP RESOURCES

Use the following resources to find out if your school's wildlife mascot is native to your region, and if it's listed as threatened or endangered:

- [NWF's Wildlife Guide](#)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife](#) (species search)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Endangered Species List](#)



Examples of Schools Using Their Mascot to Boost Wildlife Education and Conservation

- [*Clemson and LSU work together to save their mascots in the wild*](#)
- [*Houston Zoo Helps Local School Choose New Mascot to Support Saving Wildlife!*](#)
- [*Miniature Mascots: UMD Class Uses Diamondback Terrapin Hatchlings to Teach Climate Change*](#)
- [*University of Missouri-St. Louis Athletics – Louie the Mascot \(Eastern Hellbender, endangered species\)*](#)

Sources for popular mascots:

- [MascotDB](#)
- [The 100 Most Common High School Mascots](#)

Credits for photos used in this guide:

- Bald eagle: Kevin McCarthy
- Grizzly bear: Jeff Kudla
- Mountain lion: IPGGutenbergUKLtd/Getty Images
- Gray wolf: Getty Images
- Great white shark: Leighton Lum