**Wildlife in the Forest**

**Objective:**  Students will research wildlife species associated with different forest types.

**Standards of Learning:** Science LS.6, LS.7, LS.8, LS.9, LS.10, BIO.1, BIO.8

(Also 4.5 and 4.9, but lesson is designed for grades 6+)

**Materials:**

Computers with Internet access

**Activity:**

Divide students into 5 groups, assigning each group one of the 5 forest types shown on the Virginia Forest Cover types map. Each group will use the VaFWIS web site (<http://vafwis.org/fwis/?Title=VaFWIS+Species+Information+By+Land+Management&vUT=Visitor>) to generate a list of potential wildlife species living in their forest type. The following VaFWIS land use categories correspond with the Virginia forest types:

41. Deciduous forest – oak-hickory, maple-beech-birch

42. Evergreen Forest – loblolly-shortleaf pine, white pine

61. Forested Wetland – oak-gum-cypress

Searching by land use category will generate an extensive list of potential species. From this list, each member of the group should find one species likely to live in their assigned forest type. It may helpful to give each group member a different class of animal – bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian, etc.

To begin, in VaFWIS, click a species, click Habitat, and scroll down to the paragraph on Habitat Associations. This step should help to separate species living in different forests within the same general category (such as white pine vs. loblolly-shortleaf pine). Species information can also be found on the Virginia Natural Heritage Data Explorer <https://vanhde.org/>).

After choosing a species, students should write a brief report summarizing the animal’s typical food habits, habitat requirements, and life history. They should also read through the other categories of information about their animal, in order to be prepared for discussion.

**Questions for discussion:**

* How does the animal you researched use a specific type of forest to meet its needs?
* Besides the forest itself, what other habitat components does this animal need?
* What successional stage (forest age) is most likely to meet the needs of the animal?
* What are some forest management practices that benefit this animal?

*Lesson Plan Developed by Ellen Powell, Virginia Dept. of Forestry*