

Informational Books in the Preschool Classroom
Topic of Study: Animal Life in Bayous and Swamps

Babies in the Bayou by Jim Arnosky
Raccoon on His Own by Jim Arnosky

Introduction

In this guide, children are engaged in activities that primarily support two Domains in the *Arkansas Child Development and Learning Standards*: **Emergent Literacy** and **Science and Technology**. The **Learning Goals** with **Strands** which precede each activity relate to specific areas of development and learning that are the focus of the activity.

Through one storybook and one informational book, children are introduced to animal life in the bayou and in the swamp. Jim Arnosky is the author of both books; the storybook, *Raccoon on His Own*, and the informational book, *Babies in the Bayou*.

Connection to Adventures in Learning

This curriculum guide can stand alone or be used as a supplement to the following Focus Area in **Adventures in Learning**

- Focus Area: Animals

This curriculum guide can also be used with similar topics of study from any curriculum.

Materials to Collect and Make

- Print the Animal Picture Cards on cardstock to be used for activities within the curriculum guide. Laminate or cover the cards with clear adhesive for durability. (See Attachment: [Animal Picture Cards](#))
 - Make one set to be used when reading *Babies in the Bayou* and *Raccoon on His Own* to the children and for transitions. Make duplicates of some of the pictures so that you have at least one picture for each child in your group.
 - Make one set, laminate and attach either felt or a magnetic strip to the back so that children can use the pictures to create and tell their own stories.
- Make lily pads from either green butcher paper or green construction paper.

Story Presentations

Learning Goals:

CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory (*short-term and working memory*)

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences (*engagement in literacy experiences, variety of interests*)

EL1.2 Engages in read-alouds and conversations about books and stories (*story comprehension*)

EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print (*book knowledge*)

ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials (*living things*)

Book: *Raccoon on His Own* by Jim Arnosky

- Prepare to read the book, *Raccoon on His Own*.
- Show the cover, give title, author and illustrator. (Explain that the author is the person who writes the story and the illustrator is the person who draws the pictures. Jim Arnosky is both the author and the illustrator)
- Invite children to look at the cover and describe what they see.
- Repeat the title and ask children why they think raccoon is on his own, which means by himself. Accept all answers.
- Say to the children, "Let's read and find out why raccoon is on his own."
- Take your time as you read so that children have an opportunity to see all of the illustrations and to comment on what they see on each page.
- Be familiar with the names of all of the bayou creatures:
The white birds with long beaks are ibis.
The large bird with the long bill and webbed feet is a pelican
Merganser is a type of duck
Grayish blue bird with the long beak is a kingfisher (in tree on next to last page)
Warblers are a type of bird
- Follow up the reading by showing each page and invite the children to describe what they see and what they recall.
- Explain terms that children may not understand. For example, reflection is what we see when we look in a mirror. Raccoon saw his reflection in the water. Ducklings are baby ducks.

Teacher Note: *Read the book again, this time with small groups of children and follow up by inviting them to discuss how they think baby raccoon felt when he realized that he was alone in the boat as it drifted away from the shore. Ask them if they have been in a similar situation and how they felt.*

Additional Learning Goals:

SE2.1 Experiences, expresses, and regulates a range of emotions (*emotion expression*)

SE2.2 Interprets and responds to the feelings of others (*emotion understanding*)

Book: *Babies in the Bayou* by Jim Arnosky

- Prepare to read the book, *Babies in the Bayou*.
- Take this book and the book, *Raccoon on His Own*, to the reading area.
- Show the cover of *Raccoon on His Own* and recall with them some of the animals they saw in the swamp. (raccoon, ibis, snake, turtle, pelican, alligator, merganser duck, warbler). Show some of the pages if children need visual cues.
- Show the cover of *Babies in the Bayou*, state the title, say that Jim Arnosky is the author and illustrator of both books, and they will see some of the same animals in both books.
- Show the title page, read the title and remind children that the bird on the limb is a kingfisher. Kingfishers dive into the water and catch small fish. Call attention to the moss hanging from the limb and explain that moss grows on trees in the bayou.
- Show the dedication page (For Sarah) and ask children to name the animal they see. (Alligator)
- Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
- Take your time as you read the story so that children can see the details in the illustrations and to comment on what they see.
- Follow up the reading by showing the pages and invite children to describe what they see and what they recall.
- Call attention to how the mother alligator takes care of her babies. (She lets no one come near them) and how the mother duck shepherds (takes or leads) her ducklings away from danger (the alligator).
- Invite children to look at the webbed feet of the duckling and ask why they think the duckling has webbed feet. (Webbed feet help the duckling to swim.)
- Explain to children that both books, *Babies in the Bayou* and *Raccoon on His Own*, will be in the Library Center for them to look at on their own or with a friend.

Books: *Babies in the Bayou* and *Raccoon on His Own*

- Plan an additional reading of each of the books at separate times.
- Distribute Animal Picture Cards, one per child (some may be duplicates).
- Explain to children that they will help with the reading of the story by holding up the picture card of their animal as it is shown in the book.
- State the title and author and invite children who have the picture cards of the animals on the cover to hold them up and say the name of their animal.
- Do the same thing with the title page and the dedication page.
- Continue this activity as you read each page with the children.
- Thank children for helping you read the story.
- State that there will be picture cards of the animals in the stories in the Library Center, along with a felt or magnetic board, so they create and tell their own stories.

Teacher Note: Consider additional activities such as inviting children to count the animals on certain pages in *Raccoon on His Own*; for example, three ibis, the mother raccoon plus two babies, one pelican, one snake, one alligator, four warblers, three turtles, and a mother merganser duck and nine ducklings. If this counting activity is included, it supports the following **Learning Goal**:

Additional Learning Goal:

MT1.1 Demonstrates number sense and an understanding of quantity (*number names and count sequence*)

Additional Language and Literacy Activities

Learning Goals:

SE3.1 Shows awareness of self as unique individual (*preferences*)

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print (*print knowledge*)

MT1.1 Demonstrates number sense and an understanding of quantity (*number names and count sequence, connection of number, numeral, and quantity*)

Activity: Our Favorite Baby in the Bayou Graph

Directions:

- Prepare a graph with columns for four babies found in the bayou: alligator, raccoon, turtle and duck. Use a picture of each with the name written on it.
- Make name cards for each child in a size that will fit on the graph.
- Go over the chart with the children, explaining that they will decide which animal baby they like best by placing their name card in the correct column.
- Allow each child a turn to say which animal baby he/she likes best, tell why, and place his/her name card in the correct column.
- Invite the children to count the number of children who like each animal baby.

Our Favorite Baby in the Bayou

6				
5				
4		George		
3	Beckett	Hayden		Emmett
2	Maria	LaTonya	Taylor	Olivia
1	Lucy	Peyton	Juan	Lane
				
	Alligator	Raccoon	Turtle	Duck

- Involve children in writing a summary story as follows.

Our Favorite Baby in the Bayou


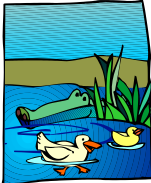
Four children like the raccoon the best. Three children like the alligator the best. Three children like the duck the best. Two children like the turtle the best.

Activity: Our Favorite Story

Directions:

- Prepare a graph with columns for the two books: *Raccoon on His Own* and *Babies in the Bayou*. Use a picture for each.
- Make name cards for each child in a size that will fit on the graph.
- Read both books to the children. Remind them that the books are by the same author and contain some of the same animals.
- Go over the chart with the children, explaining that they will decide which book they like best by placing their name card in the correct column.
- Allow each child a turn to say which book he/she likes best, tell why, and place his/her name card in the correct column.
- Invite the children to count the number of children who like each book.

Our Favorite Story

6	Emmett	
5	Charlotte	Taylor
4	Lane	George
3	Beckett	Hayden
2	Maria	LaTonya
1	Lucy	Peyton
	 <i>Raccoon on His Own</i>	 <i>Babies in the Bayou</i>

- Involve children in writing a summary story as follows.

Our Favorite Story

Six children like *Raccoon on His Own* the best. Five children like *Babies in the Bayou* the best.

Learning Goals:

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences (*engagement in literacy experiences*)

MT1.2 Explores combining and separating groups (numerical operations) (*changes in quantity, addition and subtraction*)

Activity: Fingerplay - Five Little Raccoons

<p>Five Little Raccoons</p> <p>Five little raccoons sitting in a tree (hold up 5 fingers) Teasing Mr. Alligator, You can't catch me, you can't catch me. (wave finger back and forth)</p> <p>Along came Mr. Alligator. Quiet as can be. Chomp! (Put elbows together, making the motion of an alligator's jaw snapping shut)</p>	<p>Additional verses:</p> <p>Four little raccoons Three little raccoons Two little raccoons One little raccoon</p> <p>Now there are no little raccoons sitting in a tree.</p>
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Learning Environment

Library Center

- Add the books, *Babies in the Bayou* and *Raccoon on His Own*
- Add a set of the pictures and a felt or magnetic board

Discovery Center

Learning Goals:

MT3.1 Participates in exploratory measurement activities and compares objects (*measurement*)

ST1.1 Engages in the scientific process to collect, analyze, and communicate information (*observations, questions, and predictions, investigation and hypotheses testing*)

Activity: Making Mud

- Do this experiment with small groups of children (3 to 5).
- Provide for each group a small amount of dirt (about 3 cups) in a container, a clear plastic measuring cup with numerals to indicate ounces and a large spoon for stirring.
- Ask children what they think will happen when they mix dirt with water. (it will make mud)
- Show children the measuring cup and the markings for ounces.
- Fill the cup with eight ounces of water and invite children to predict how many ounces of water it will take to make mud. Record their predictions.
- Allow each child to add a small amount of the water to the dirt, and then stir. Say, "Celia added about one ounce of water to the dirt. Did she make mud?"
- Continue letting each child add a small amount of water and stir. Ask the same questions each time.
- Continue adding water until mud is formed.
- Invite children to look at the cup and see how much water is left. If there is one ounce, say, "We started with eight ounces of water and now we have one ounce in the glass. That means we used seven ounces of water to make mud."
- Look at recorded predictions to see whose guess was the closest.

Teacher Notes:

- Consider doing this activity outdoors on a warm and sunny day. Allow children to use the mud for finger-painting. Leave the pictures outdoors to dry. As children are painting with mud, invite them to describe how the mud feels on their hands. Have water for washing hands and paper towels for drying.
- Developers used 5 ounces of water to make playdough consistency mud. Amount of water needed to make mud also depends on the dirt you use.

Block Center

- Add bayou animal figures to the Block Center

Water Center

- Add bayou animal figures to the Water Play Center: turtles, alligators, ducks, fish

Sand Center

- Bury small plastic Easter eggs in sand box and suggest that children dig with their hands like the raccoon did to find the eggs.

Art Center

- Create a bayou background on a large strip of butcher paper. Include mud, water, trees with moss hanging from branches. Label the scene **Animals in the Bayou**.
- Suggest that children draw pictures of bayou animals, cut them out and add them to the scene.

Teacher Note: *Place a copy of **Babies in the Bayou** and **Raccoon on His Own** in or near the Art Center.*

Gross Motor Activity

Learning Goal:

PH1.1 Demonstrates locomotor skills

- Create lily pads from green butcher paper or construction paper.
- Use the lily pads to create a maze through which children can travel in different ways.
- Invite children to crawl through the maze, to walk through the maze, and to pretend to swim through the maze (arms making swimming motions as they walk). Remind them to not touch the lily pads.
- Invite children to suggest additional ways they can move through the maze.

Transition Activities

Learning Goal:

CD2.2 Shows flexibility in adjusting thinking and behavior to different contexts (*adjusting behavior to match context*)

Name Your Bayou Animal

- Give each child a picture card of an animal in the bayou.
- Invite each child, one at a time, to show his or her picture and name it, give the card to you and transition to the next activity.
- Continue this until each child has transitioned.

Family Connection and Engagement

- Send home a note to families explaining that the children are learning about animals in the bayou and swamp.
- Include in the note the names of the animals in the books, *Babies in the Bayou* and *Raccoon on His Own*.
- Suggest that families, with their child, do a google search for photos and information about the various bayou and swamp animals and discuss the photos they see as well as information in which their child seems to be interested.

Additional Books and Resources

The Three Little Gators by Helen Ketteman

The Swamp Where Gator Hides by Marianne Berkes, illustrated by Roberta Baird

Music:

Alligator Stomp by Anna Moo from the album, *Anna Moo Crackers*

Teacher Note: *This can be added to the Music Center*