



Activity: Rubber Band Entanglement

Topic: Litter Impacts on Wildlife

TEKS: N/A

Background: <watch the SPLASH video on Litter Impacts on Wildlife>

When trash is thrown on the ground or not disposed of properly it can do more than just add litter to the watershed and pollute our waterways. Litter can be eaten (ingested) by wildlife, building up in their stomachs and causing them to get sick or die. Other items, including fishing line, can wrap around (entangle) wildlife. Once entangled, it can be difficult or impossible for an animal to free itself and this can injure the animal or make it hard for them to hunt and feed themselves. You can help prevent wildlife entanglement by making sure litter items are properly disposed of – for example, fishing line should either be thrown away in a trash can, or in a monofilament recycling tube when available.

Materials:

- Rubber band – small to medium depending on the size of your hand
- A few small objects like coins or small toys

Instructions:

Part 1 – Rubber Band Entanglement – Can You Get Free?

1. Take the Rubber Band and put it on your hand around your index and pinky fingers as shown in the pictures below.



2. Try to remove the rubber band without using your thumb, your body, or any other objects. While the rubber band is only wrapped around two fingers, wildlife often get entangled in ways they cannot use other parts of their body or other objects to remove it.



Part 2 – Rubber Band Entanglement – Can You Eat?

1. Wrap the Rubber Band around your thumb and first two fingers as shown in the pictures below, this will act like the bill of a bird that has had its bill entangled in litter such as fishing line.



2. With your fingers wrapped, try to pick up the small items you gathered and fit them through the fingers (like a bird trying to swallow a fish).

Part 3 – Discuss/Report

Depending on grade level and current learning environment, choose from the following report/discussion options:

1. Report your ability to free and feed yourself when entangled.
2. Discuss what litter items, besides fishing line, might entangle an animal and cause it harm or hinder its ability to feed itself. Discuss or list sustainable alternatives to those items or what steps you can take when disposing of the items to reduce their impact on wildlife.
3. Besides fishing line wrapping around a bird's bill or neck, discuss how else a bird or other animal might get entangled that would hinder its ability to hunt or feed itself.