

Print out the pictures and read the descriptions of some of the animals that can be found at Stone Mountain Park. Ask the students what habitats they think they will see at Stone Mountain based on the basic needs of each animal. You can also print out the park map (any white area on the map is actually forest) and have students label where each animal might live.



White-tail Deer:

Deer live in a variety of habitats which include brush, wetland, hardwood forest and meadow and are likely to be seen in the park in the early morning. Deer eat leaves, twigs, nuts and acorns and have a stomach with four parts to help it digest these things. Male deer grow antlers for the fall season (the mating season) every year and shed these a few months later. Deer communicate with each other through tail signals, noises and odors- they have highly developed sight, smell and hearing.

These animals were very important in our country's history – they were used for food and clothing by the Native Americans and the early settlers.

Red-tailed Hawk:

This hawk is often seen or heard (a screech-like call) throughout the park. They are birds of prey and live at the edge of forests where there are open areas for hunting. They eat mice, rabbits and snakes and have long strong toes and talons (claws for catching and killing their prey). Red-Tailed Hawks have eyesight about 8 times better than humans and were once used in the sport of falconry. Their special role in nature is keeping the rodent population under control.



Monarch Butterflies:

This insect can be seen feeding on flowering plants in the park throughout the summer. In fall they migrate south and can be seen flying over the trees in their journey. Some were recorded as flying more than 2000 miles from Canada to Mexico. The monarchs lay their eggs on milkweed plants- a toxic plant. When their young hatch they feed off this plant and so become toxic to predators. The bright colors of this butterfly warn other animals of their toxicity.

Cottontail Rabbits:

These mammals are nocturnal (night time animals) and can be seen in the park in early morning and late evening. They eat lots of plant material and are often found near forest edges. Rabbits can have up to 10 babies in 1 litter and are the most widely hunted game animal in the US. They are also a prominent prey animal for large predatory mammals and birds. Their only defenses are speed and hearing.





Black Rat Snake:

This snake is a non-venomous constrictor and will prey on rodents and other small animals. Adults can be 5-6 feet long and are often encountered by humans because of their prominence throughout North America and the variety of habitats they live in. Young black rat snakes look very different from the adults- they are patterned gray, black and white.

Eastern Chipmunk:

Chipmunks are small mammals that can be seen throughout the park. They especially prefer areas where the ground is covered with dense plants – this helps them hide easily. The chipmunk's home is a burrow beneath the ground; this is where they spend most of their time. Chipmunks carry several nuts at a time in their cheek pouches and bring these back to store in their burrows.



Painted Turtle:

This is the most widespread turtle in North America. They hibernate at the bottom of ponds and shallow lakes through the winter but can be seen basking in the sun in warmer weather. The turtles sit on half submerged logs near the water's edge. They are often seen in small groups on the log. They consume aquatic insects and a variety of plants.

Tiger Swallowtail:

This is the most popular swallowtail, one of the largest butterflies in North America and Georgia's state butterfly. They can be found feeding from flowering plants around the park- most brightly colored flat-faced flowers are attractive to them. There is both a yellow and blue phase of the female butterfly, which can be seen.



American Toad:

This toad is plentiful throughout the park- in the summer the tiny young toads are found along many of the park's trails- often in the paths. Toads prefer to live in areas where insects and moisture are abundant. These toads do have warts in the spots on their skin and these secrete a toxin, which will make many predators sick if a toad is eaten.

Great Blue Heron:

This wading bird is commonly seen near park lakes. They live in marshy areas nearby rivers and lakes where they feed on fish. The birds usually live in a colony with others, especially during breeding season. They hold their neck in an S shape and their legs trail behind them as they fly.



Grey Squirrel:

This is likely the most common mammal viewed in the park woods. They live in our hardwood forests where they can find plenty of nuts to feed on. Squirrels' teeth grow on and on throughout their life and gnawing on nuts helps to keep them worn down. In the winter their large nests of leaves and twigs are easy to spot high in the trees. Many historic journals have noted large migrations of squirrels - thousands traveling together to the south. In the eighteen hundreds forests were more continuous though throughout the east and would have provided a migratory corridor.

Mallard Duck:

These are seen near the park's lakes, ponds and rivers. They are a common game bird throughout North America and are the ancestors of all domestic ducks. Mallards are dabbling ducks- they feed in the upper waters of lakes instead of diving for food. The female bird is not colorful like the male in the picture rather she is dull brown so she may hide easily while sitting on her nest.





Grey Fox:

This is the smallest member of the dog family and is found in habitats similar to those within the park. They eat mice, moles, bird's eggs and rabbits. Foxes are swift runners and have excellent smell, hearing and sight. Red foxes also live within the park- they are more common on the mountain outcrops.

Box Turtle:

In the park these turtles are often found crossing the roads in wooded areas, or deep in the woodlands near shallow water. They have the ability to completely close up their shell for protection. Box turtles, like other reptiles will hibernate in cold weather by burrowing in the soil. This turtle can live up to 30-40 years- some live up to 100 years!



Wild Turkey:

Turkeys are sometimes seen in the park in our mature forests and near forest edges. They feed on nuts and seeds in the fall and winter and greens and insects in the summer. The bare skin that is seen on their head is used in dominance demonstrations between males and to attract females. Georgia is second only to Texas in the number of turkeys found in the state. They too, like deer, were once an important part of the diet of Native Americans and early settlers.