First Impressions

PACIFIC GROVE MUSEUM of NATURAL HISTORY

Based on an activity from *Growing Up Wild: Exploring Nature with Young Children, 2013*

https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/growing-wild/resources/first-impressions

Format: This activity can be done indoors or outdoors and can be used with all age levels with minimal modification. It involves having participants move around and can be facilitated in 10min-30min and works well with small or large groups.

Overview: A facilitator shows a picture of an animal and participants move to an emoji that represents how they feel – their first impression – of the animal. The group can then discuss why they moved to the emoji they moved to. This is a good warm up activity to help participants understand their own biases for and against certain animals and to think about how this might affect their ability to learn about and to protect some animals.

Activity

1. Place the emoji pictures on the ground spaced apart and make sure everyone in the group is in agreement about the emotion each emoji represents.
2. Show participants the first picture and ask them to move to the emoji that represents their first impression of this animal.
3. Have a participant in each of the emoji groups explain why they put themselves in that group.
    a. Young children may need support in putting words to emotions.
    b. Older participants can be challenged to think about what the consequences are of a group of people having that emotion towards an animal. For example, if many people express fear of wolves, there may be little public sentiment for passing or enforcing laws that protect wolves. They can also reflect on if hearing someone else's impressions made them change theirs.
    c. Take care to validate all feelings represented. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to feel – they are all feelings. But feelings can have consequences. Being aware of feelings and biases will help to make sure that these biases do not control our implementation of good learning, science, and conservation.
    d. As an optional extension of the activity, the group can graph their responses. Write the name of the animals at the top of a whiteboard. Across the bottom draw the emojis. Have a participant count the number of people in each emoji group and make that number of X's stacked up from the bottom (like a very simple bar graph). Compare different animals and discuss what they notice.
4. Repeat the process for several different animals – cuddy and cute to creepy and scary.


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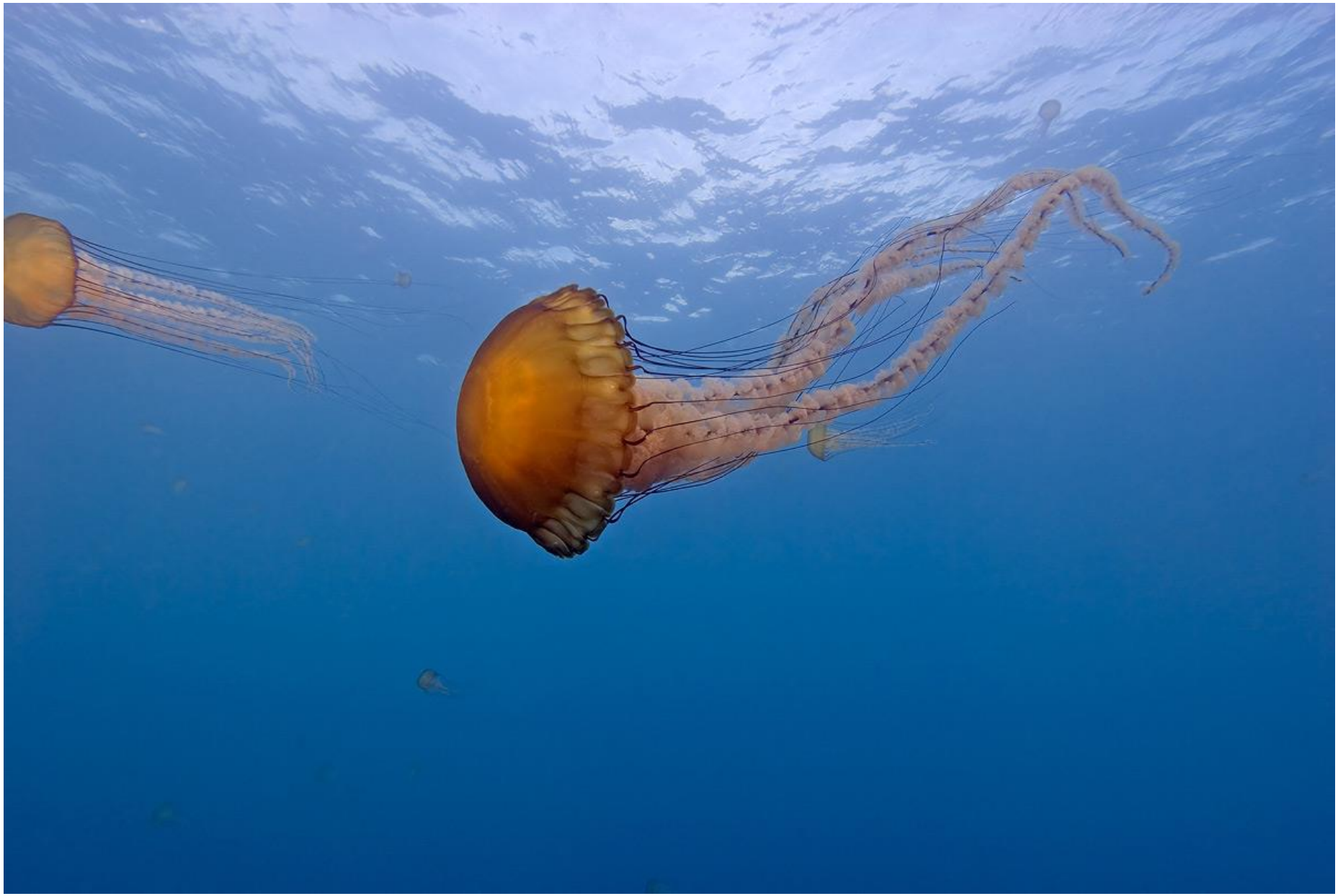


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