



 Sylvan Dell Publishing
www.sylvandellpublishing.com

Baby dogs are puppies and they belong to a litter, but what is a baby skunk and what is the name of its group? This clever, rhythmic story tells us just that! Counting from one to ten, familiar backyard animals are introduced by baby and family group name. Each stanza also tells a bit more about each animal by providing clues as to what they eat, how they sound or where they live. The “For Creative Minds” section includes more animal fun facts, information on keeping a nature journal and how to watch for wildlife in your own backyard.

Author/Artist Bio:



Valarie Giogas (pronounced JOE-gus) has been writing since she was a young child. As a teacher, her favorite part of teaching was the books. She's been writing for children ever since she discovered that she could combine her love for children's literature with her passion for writing. The idea for *In My Backyard* began when her son was in preschool. They always drove by a gaggle of geese and he would giggle when she told him the group name. When the geese had goslings, the idea for this book was cemented. A member of the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Valarie has also written articles for Hopscotch Magazine. Valarie and her family live in a suburb of Boston. Visit Valarie on the web at www.valariegiogas.com.



Katherine Zecca was a scientific illustrator and graphic artist for NOAA, where she created illustrations of seals, whales, dolphins, crabs and fish for marine biologists. Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of NOAA Fisheries, Katherine was presented a National Award for her illustration of an historical poster. She continues to illustrate for the Smithsonian's National Zoo and created a logo for the National Museum of American Art. In addition to *In My Backyard*, Katherine has written and illustrated a book about the Atlantic Puffin for Down East Books. Katherine teaches nature journaling/sketching, from as far a field as the Pribilof Islands, Alaska, to New Brunswick, and Maine. Katherine and her husband live in a small town outside of Seattle. Visit Katherine on the web at www.katherinezecca.com.

Language Arts

- Ask students, “After reading *In My Backyard*, did any of the group names or baby names surprise you?” Facilitate a discussion around the answers.
- Many animals have more than one group or baby name. Have students think of for each animal? Research to see how many different group or baby names they can find for each animal. Use some of the links found at www.sylvandellpublishing.com or www.valariegiogas.com.
- Discuss how many animals have the same baby name.
- Discuss how many animals have the same group name.
- Using the rhyme scheme of *In My Backyard*, work with students to write their own stanzas for other animals.
- Sequence the animals in the book. Which came first? Second? Etc.
- Copy stanzas onto paper and cut into sentence strips. Have students put them into the correct order/sequence.
- Have students complete the games (matching by group name, matching by baby name and a word search) found at <http://valariegiogas.com/teachers.htm>.

Math

- *In My Backyard* counts animals from one to ten. Find out the average number of babies each animal gives birth to. (HINT: Each animal is able to give birth to at least the number of babies on its page).
- Create a number chart or graph. Chart what animals give birth to only one baby, two babies, etc.
- Many animals in the book do not come out at the same time of day. Divide a pie chart into sections that include different times of day (dawn, dusk, mid-day, evening, etc.). In what section does each animal belong? Compare and contrast the chart upon completion.
- Measure and compare tail lengths.
- Using life-sized replicas, compare footprint sizes.
- Use items from each animal as manipulatives (ie: acorn math for squirrels).
- Use animal crackers for sorting, patterns, etc.
- Research and compare baby animal weights. Which is more, less, equal?

Science

- Do any of the animals in *In My Backyard* prey on others in the book?
- Find out what animals eat the same things (for math, chart these results).
- Are all the animals in the book mammals? If not, what are they? What are the differences between each?

Social Studies

- Place each animal picture on a map based upon where they originated or where their habitat is.
- How do other cultures treat each animal in *In My Backyard*?
- Are any of the animals in the book endangered? Facilitate a discussion about endangered animals.

Art

- Have students make a diorama of their backyard. What animals will they include? What does the habitat look like?
- Make animal masks.
- Create partial photographs of animals (ie: close up of rabbit's foot). Ask students to guess what animal is in the picture.
- Find photographs of each animal. Make puzzles out of each.
- Make a mural of each animal's habitat.