

WHAT IS A POPULATION?



The activities in Unit 1 help students understand what is meant by a “population,” how we determine the size of a population, and whether that size can be considered large or small.

Before beginning these activities, go over the following information with your students:

A **population** is a group of living things that are the same.

They might live in the same area or be spread around the world. For example, your backyard may have a population of ants. That would be the entire group of ants living in your backyard. But there are ants all over the world, so the total number of ants is also a population. Some populations, like the worldwide population of ants, are just too big to count. Ants are very small and live in so many places. It is far easier to find out the population of koalas. Most of them live in one country, Australia, and only in certain areas, or **habitats**, which have the kind of trees and climate that koalas need to live. Wildlife biologists, people who study plants and animals, have methods for counting all sorts of populations.

People also make up populations. Your school population is all of the people who work and study in your school: students, teachers, librarians, secretaries, the principal, custodians, and the people who prepare food in the cafeteria. Your town has a population, and so does your county, state, country, and the world. You are a part of all of these populations.

Some human populations are very much the same and others are very different. For instance, the population of your class would include kids who are all about the same age. But they look very different and like different things. The population of the world is even more varied than the students in your class. It includes people of all ages, races, religions, and lifestyles.