

SCIENCE TIMES

Up to date information and issues related to Science, Technology and the Environment

STUDENT ACTIVITIES Colour and Survival

Research and Inquiry

If we look at the current efforts to save endangered species, we will likely note that the best-looking animals (e.g. whales, pandas, penguins) get top billing. However, the human approach to saving the 'cutest' creatures does not take into account the role that all animals play in their ecosystems. Create a campaign to save an endangered species that is not particularly attractive and argue why this species plays a vital role in its ecosystem. (SS)

http://www.scienceagogo.com/news/endangered_species.shtml

Read this article written by David Suzuki about the meeting he had scheduled with Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter. Although the meeting never took place because of the deadly bite from a stingray, Suzuki commends Mr. Irwin for raising awareness about those less 'beautiful' creatures found in nature. Brainstorm a list of actions that you could take to raise the profile of a relatively unknown species. Make a poster promoting these ideas. (All levels)

http://www.thegreenpages.ca/portal/ca/2006/09/crocodile_hunter_more_than_jus.html#more

Listen to the audio file about two men's efforts to save the Golden Frog in Panama. A fungus is wiping out species and the only way they have found to save the frogs is to remove them from the forest. As a result, they are housing the frogs in a hotel room. As you listen, note each of the reasons stated that makes this frog worth saving. On the CBC website, search for "Saving the Golden Frog" and click "Listen to her report." (You'll need RealPlayer.) (All levels)

<http://www.cbc.ca/thehour/blog/index.html>

Camouflage is a natural, survival strategy that animals have to protect themselves from predators. Here are several activities that you can do with your students to study camouflage:

<http://iitc.tamu.edu/1998and2000/lessons/lesson13.html>
(grades 4-5)

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/grsa/resources/curriculum/element/lesson10.htm> (grades 4-5)

<http://www.evergreen.ca/en/lg/lessons/camouflage-lott.html>
(intermediate)

<http://weaselhead.org/learn/modules/2/> (intermediate)

Discussion and Debate

What happens when humans try to breed tigers for their attractive, white coats? Read this letter from a woman who points out what steps are required to replicate these unnaturally coloured animals. Make a case to put a halt to the breeding of these white tigers, despite the human attraction. (MJS/SS)

<http://www.itsyourtimes.com/?q=node/2647/print>

There are several causes that lead to endangered species. (MJS)
<http://library.thinkquest.org/5736/causes.htm> Select an endangered species from this list: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/info/gallery2006>. Then order the causes (see above) from greatest to least based on the impact they have on your endangered animal. Make a plan to counteract those negative affects caused by humans.

Discussion questions: (SS)

Which of these causes are natural and which are caused by humans?

How do we decide which species should be saved and which ones shouldn't?

If humans select certain species to survive, aren't we upsetting the balance of the ecosystem? What are the consequences?

Take Action

This article features a list of 10 endangered species and steps you can take to help in their conservation. Suggestions include writing letters, changing shopping habits, and supporting eco-tourism. (MJS/SS)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,329703494-110650.00.html>

Read some of the ways you can help in the effort to save sharks, which are being killed for their fins. (All levels)

<http://www.savingsharks.com/>

Online petitions are an easy way to take action. Once you sign up, you can expect to get updates on a regular basis telling you about related topics. Here is an online petition for beluga whales from a discussion group called The Nature Conservancy: (SS)

<http://www.care2.com/c2c/groups/disc.html?gpp=85&pst=951032>

Related Links

Learn about endangered ecosystems from this Scholastic website.

Receive a mission, watch a video, then research Costa Rican caterpillars, Mexican wildcats or Brazilian river otters: (elementary)

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/explorer/ecosystems/index.htm>

Canadian filmmaker, Rob Stewart, sets out to raise awareness about sharks, not to mention the slaughter of sharks for their fins. In his film, *Sharkwater*, he shows footage of the shy and reserved creatures that have gotten a bad rap from negative publicity. Stewart claims that sensationalizing them as terrifying, aggressive killers sells, which explains why they have gained such a notorious reputation. (MJS/SS)

<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/film/sharkwater.html>

Trivia: It's been repeatedly reported that *Jaws* author, Peter Benchley, regretted what his book did to the reputation of sharks. It led to the slaughter of sharks, and as a result, Benchley spent the rest of his life studying sharks to increase awareness about them. (MJS/SS)

http://www.elasmo-research.org/conservation/jaws_reconsidered.htm

March of the Penguins is a documentary filmed in Antarctica. It features the challenges facing the emperor penguins as they make their way to their breeding grounds. Here is a teacher's guide that can be used with this movie: (elementary/MJS)

http://www.hallmarkchannel.com/publish/etc/medialib/sharred/educator_guides/march_of_the_penguins.html

In this webquest, intermediate students learn about animal habitats. The animals are divided into their 5 vertebrate (possessing a backbone) groups and students become researchers who must design a habitat for each. (elementary)

<http://www.karenclassroom.com/treasuretrove/gradesix/habitangouts/teachers.html>

