

# "Wildlife and the Environment"

**GRADES:** 7-College

**TIME:** 45-90 minutes for each section

**MINIMUM REQUIRED MATERIALS:**

- Choices cards or bag of props for "Which Harms Less?"
- Video
- Bag of whale stomach contents (2 gallon jugs, 35 feet of nylon rope, 2 plastic trash bags, 10 miscellaneous plastic objects, and a piece of polystyrene)

**Introduction:** *Wildlife and the Environment* is a broad title for a range of topics which you can discuss with students from endangered species, hunting, trapping, fishing, marine mammals, habitat destruction, rainforest issues, pollution, overconsumption, primates, and human overpopulation. You will find a range of topics outlined below. They cannot all fit into a single presentation, and you may wish to offer a series of presentations which cover a variety of issues.

## Part One:

### Engaging Your Audience with Visualization

**A.** After a brief personal introduction ask the students to close their eyes and imagine what the place they are sitting in looked like 500 years ago. Ask them to notice the terrain, the animals, the sounds, the smells. Who lived in this place? What did it look like? Ask the stu-

dents to open their eyes and to share what they imagined? What remains? What is gone? Why?

**B.** What has happened to our planet and the animals who inhabit it? What has happened to the oceans, rivers, wetlands, and forests? (Pollution, deforestation, extinction, habitat destruction.) What are the three principle causes of extinction of species? (Habitat loss, hunting/trapping/fishing, pollution.) How do our daily actions affect wildlife and the environment? (The food we eat, clothes we wear, products we buy, furniture we choose, how many children we have, etc.)

## Part Two: Facts and Information About Specific Topics

### A. Hunting, Trapping & Fishing

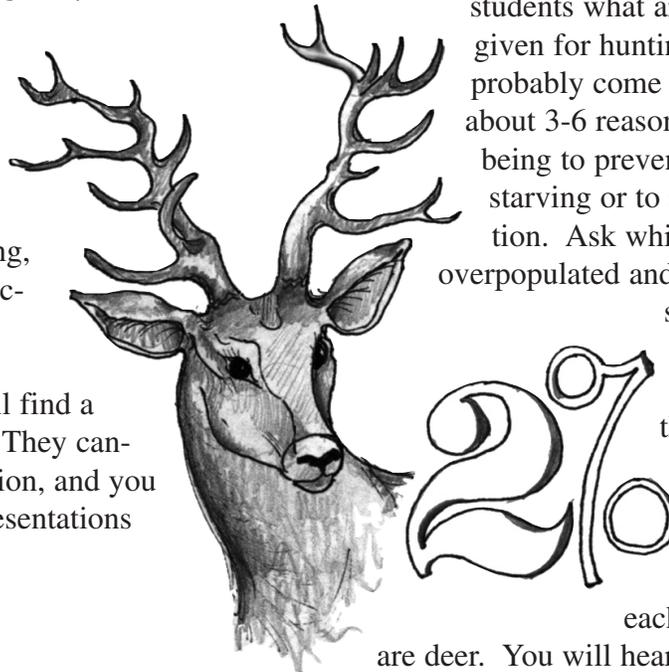
1. Critical thinking about hunting: Ask

students what are the reasons given for hunting. They will probably come up with a list of about 3-6 reasons, the primary one being to prevent animals from starving or to stop overpopulation. Ask which animals are overpopulated and would otherwise starve if not killed

by hunters, and 99% of the time the students will answer "deer."

Then ask what percentage of animals hunted each year in the U.S.

are deer. You will hear quite a range of responses, usually big numbers (90%, 75%, 50%, 25%). Tell the students the answer is approximately 2%. List the numbers of other animals killed by hunters (you can find relevant statistics and information on this subject in the back of this workbook under "Resource Materials").



2. Even though deer represent a small fraction of the animals killed in the U.S., deer hunters are a large percentage of hunters, and their license fees pay most Fish & Wildlife salaries. Use the information in the fact sheets in this workbook to discuss the realities of deer populations.

3. Make sure to learn about your state's relevant hunting and trapping laws, and discuss these with the students. If leghold traps are legal, bring one to the classroom and demonstrate how they work.



Discuss laws regarding posting land, and raise questions such as “Why should property-owners bear the responsibility for paying for signs and posting their land? Should hunters have the right to walk onto private, unposted land with guns and begin shooting or trapping?”

4. Fishing is a neglected subject. Most people who oppose hunting do not oppose fishing, and it is a subject rarely discussed critically. Some issues to address include: • the ability of fishes to feel pain, and the sensitive nerve endings in their mouths • the delicate oils on their scales which can be rubbed off when they are caught and released, resulting in eventual death even with catch and release fishing • suffocation when they are left to die slowly after being caught • lost line, hooks, and lead weights which kill birds and other

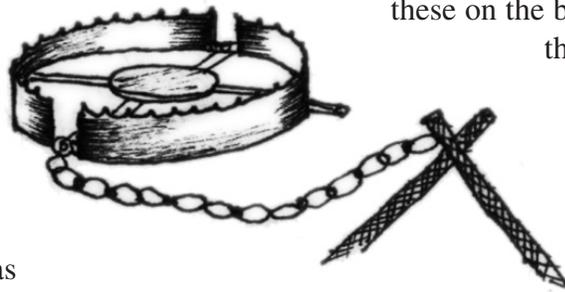
sea life • polluted fishes in rivers, lakes and the ocean which should not be consumed anyway • overfishing/commercial fishing • fish farming in which fishes are fed huge quantities of other fishes who have been netted • drift nets and ghost nets (lost drift nets) which catch everything in their path including sea turtles and marine mammals

5. Ask students what they can do about these issues and concerns.

## B. Endangered Species

1. Divide students into groups of 5 and hand out sheets from *Life Magazine* article on endangered species (see “Resource Materials” at the end of this workbook). Ask students to read the text on their page and to notice why the animals on their page are endangered.

Have each group report the reasons, and list these on the board. With few exceptions the reasons all have to do with things that people have done, specifically: destroying habitat, hunting/trapping/capturing, and/or introducing other species to an ecosystem where they don't belong.



2. Discuss the reasons for habitat destruction which include: animal agriculture and grazing, logging, development. Ask students what we can do to stop these various threats to other species. Use activities and suggestions from the animal agriculture outline when discussing agricultural effects on habitat.

3. Ask students to think about their own lives and the ways in which their lifestyle choices may be affecting other species and contributing to extinctions.

4. **Activity: CHOICES** - This activity can be used for almost any subject (see the outline in *Perspectives on Animals*, page 28.) If you are

using the CHOICES activity for a wildlife and environment talk, make sure that you create cards relevant to this subject. It will still include many of the same cards; for example “hamburger versus veggie burger” is equally applicable to the environment and endangered species as it is to farm animals. You can add new choices such as “new furniture made from teak or mahogany vs. antique furniture” or “coffee vs. Roma” (Roma is a brand name of a delicious, grain-based substitute; coffee is usually grown in large plantations which were formerly rainforests.) Or “Maxwell House vs. Organic Coffee.”

#### **D. Marine Mammals**

1. Students love learning about marine mammals, and teachers are often enthusiastic about inviting a guest speaker to discuss dolphins and whales even if they are reluctant to have a speaker discuss vivisection or factory farming.
2. Acquaint yourself with facts about marine mammals by reading books and/or an encyclopedia about these animals. While your purpose is not to provide much biological information about these species, but rather to discuss what is happening to them in the wild and in captivity, you must make sure that you have basic information on dolphins, porpoises, and whales.
3. Ask students to define a marine mammal (animals who live in or by the sea, who are warm-blooded, breathe air, and who bear live young whom they nurse, including dolphins, whales, porpoises, seals, sea lions, walruses, polar bears and sea otters). Shift the discussion to dolphins and whales and ask students to consider the ways that these animals are like us (caring for young, intelligence, playfulness, long life, family groups, communication, etc.). Then ask ways in which they are different (sonar, ability to live in the water, etc.). You may wish to use a cetacean comparison poster (available from American Cetacean Society, see page 86) which compares cetacean size not only to each other, but also to a human, dinosaur and elephant.
4. Ask what is happening to these animals? (caught in fishing nets, poisoned or choked by pollutants and trash, captured for display, etc.)
5. **Guided Imagery:** Ask students to close their eyes and to imagine that they are a dolphin swimming in the ocean. Describe a day, swimming with their family for miles, communicating with their pod, meeting another pod with whom they cannot communicate effectively because of different language, etc. Now shift description to sound of a boat coming, confusing sounds, caught by a net, lifted onto a boat and taken out of their habitat, brought to a tank with other dolphins they don't know and four walls and a floor which echoes their clicks and whistles, where food must be earned by tricks, etc. After the imagery, ask students to open their eyes and share how they are feeling.
6. **Video:** Film clips from news reports discussing whale deaths in captivity are very useful, as are the videos *Pity the Pilot Whale* and *Where Have all the Dolphins Gone?*
7. **Activity: Presidential Commission:** Explain that the president of the United States has asked you to find out from students whether or not dolphins and whales should be captured, displayed and forced to perform for us. The president is creating a commission to discuss the matter to determine whether Congress should consider a bill to ban the capture and displaying of cetaceans. Divide the class into two equal groups. One group's job is to think of all the reasons why it is good to capture and display these animals (the “pros”), while the other group's job is to think of all the reasons it is

not good (the “cons”). Each group should think of as many reasons as possible (whether or not they personally agree with the reasons). Have a representative from each group list the pros and cons and write these down in two columns on the blackboard. When the lists are complete, explain that in many places it is illegal to capture and display cetaceans (including South Carolina, Victoria [in British Columbia, Canada], and Great Britain).

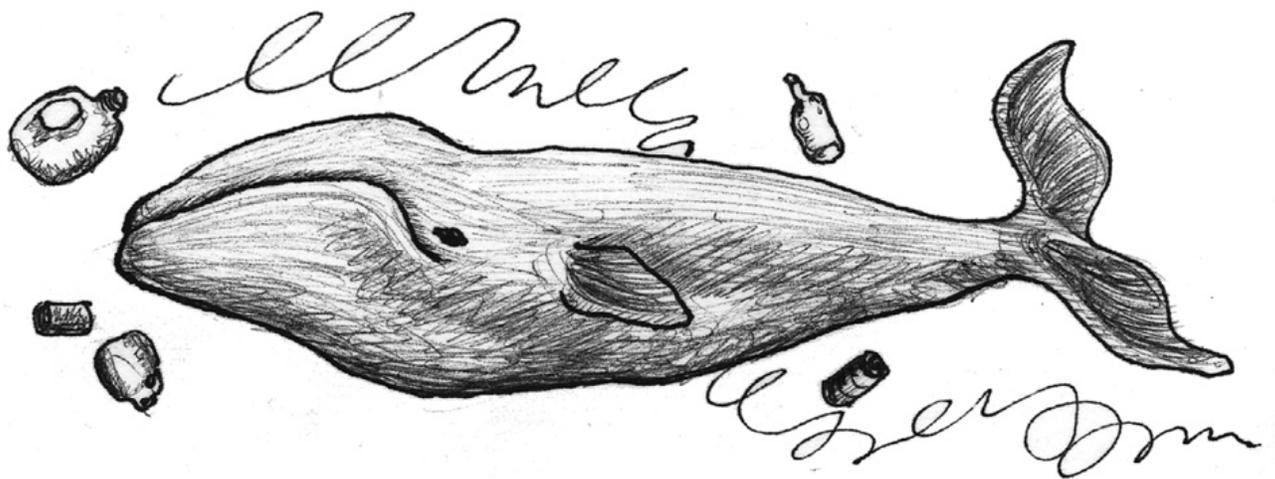
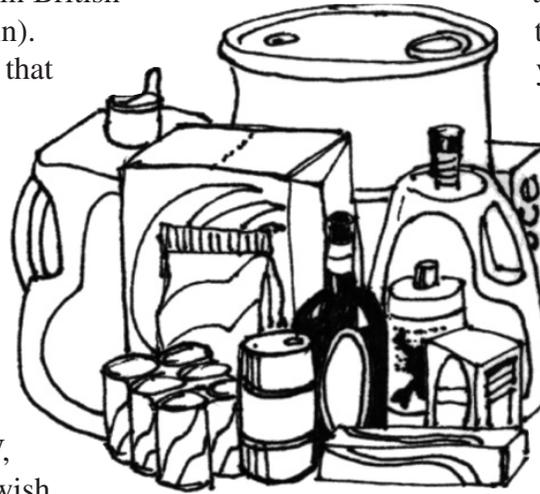
Ask the students to vote, explaining that they may vote how they truly feel, not based on the group’s assignment. Tally the votes, and let the students know that you will be contacting the President with this information. Ask for a student volunteer to also write to the President and leave the President’s address on the board: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20500. (You may wish to share that the President did not really contact you for this information, but in fact is very interested in the views of young people, and that you will still be sharing this information with the President.)

**8. Activity: Whale Bag** - The mysterious garbage bag which has been by your side during the duration of the program is actually

filled with garbage that was found inside the body of a 28 foot whale who was found dead on the beach off North Carolina. The contents are representative of the items found in the whale’s body. You may wish to climb on the teacher’s desk for effect as you overturn the bag and let the garbage pour out onto the floor, asking the students what

they think the contents represent. After you’ve explained that trash items like these kill marine animals, (and that these items represent the things found in the dead whale), pass the items out to the students and ask them what could have happened differently so that their

item would not have wound up inside a whale. For example, the rope could have been reused and not discarded. Many of the plastic items in your bag may be unnecessary, or represent overpackaging, and people could have chosen different products. The plastic jugs could have been recycled, turned into bird feeders, or reused. Let the students use



their imagination to determine how else these products could have been used, so that they can “save the whale.”

### 9. Activity: Guided Imagery

**“Imagine a World”** - Like the Presidential Commission, this activity can be used for a variety of programs (see outline for *Perspectives on Animals*, page 25.) At the end of a program, you can ask the students to close their eyes and imagine a different world from the one in which we live. After asking them to sit comfortably and breathe deeply, in a calm voice you may say something like this:

“Imagine a world in which the air is clean to breathe, and the lakes, rivers and streams are clean enough to drink from. In this world no one dumps their garbage into the oceans, and marine mammals live in unpolluted seas. The forests are thriving, and wildlife abounds. In this world there is no more war, no more poverty, no more racism, sexism, or prejudice of any kind. No species is endangered because of people, and animals are not abused or exploited for human desires. And now imagine yourself doing something to help bring about whatever part of this world is most important to you. Make a small promise to do something to help bring about this world, and make sure that it is a promise that you will keep. Each day brings you an opportunity for another promise. When you are ready open your eyes.”

Invite students to share their promises out loud. This is very empowering! If the students do not wish to share their promises out

loud, encourage them to share their promise with a friend after class. Remind them that their promises give each other new ideas as well as hope.

### E. Primates

1. Like Marine Mammals, primates are popular animals. We, ourselves, are primates, and many schools and teachers will welcome a discussion of our closest living relatives: chimpanzees, orangutans and gorillas. Make certain to distinguish apes from monkeys, and to discuss the similarities between us. There are many subjects to cover in relation to primates: habitat destruction and potential extinction, poaching, the pet and zoo trade, and biomedical research.

### 2. Activity : Guided Imagery

**“Capture”** - Ask students to close their eyes, sit comfortably and breathe deeply. In a calm, clear voice, say the following:

“Imagine that you are a baby monkey living in the jungle in Central America. You are with your mother, high up in a tree. She is grooming you, and you feel safe and happy. Suddenly, your mother stiffens with fear. You hear noises down below and you smell an acrid, sour smell as you see strange two legged beings emerge from the woods. They are carrying long, black, shiny sticks. Suddenly you hear the loudest noise you have ever heard, and your mother and the other monkeys begin to scream. You see monkeys falling out of the trees onto the ground. Your mother carries you higher into the tree and puts you in a crevice in the tree where you will be safe. Then another loud shot rings out, and your mother falls to the ground. You quickly climb

down the tree after her and grab onto her body. She won't move, and her eyes do not see you. You hold onto her tightly as you cry out. Then darkness surrounds you as a net descends over your body."

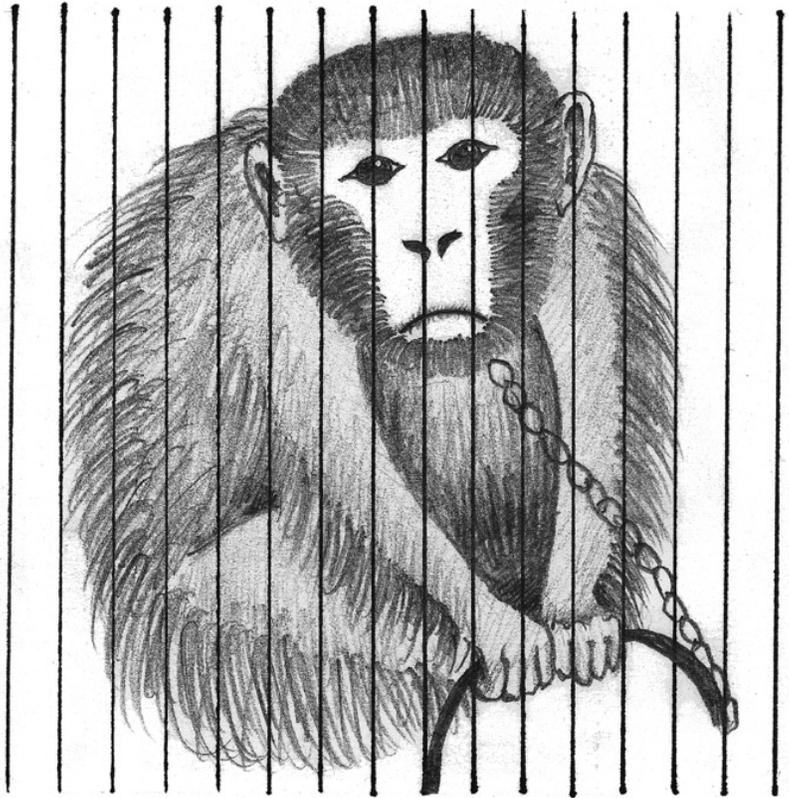
Ask students to open their eyes, and to tell you how they feel. Some students may be crying, while others may have had no significant experience at all because guided imagery stories do not engage them. Allow students to express their feelings. Then ask students why they think you told them this story. Some will understand that this is how many primates are captured for zoos, circuses, the film industry, the pet trade, and biomedical research.

3. You may wish to focus your talk on any of the above topics. If you are teaching about zoos, circuses and other forms of entertainment, you may want to use the video *Cheap Tricks* (available from PETA, see page 79) which concerns animals in entertainment. There are many issues to cover including:

- a. training
- b. transportation
- c. breeding and surplus animals
- d. use after infancy and childhood (most apes become too dangerous to use as they mature, and may then be sold for biomedical research.)

4. You may wish to focus your talk on biomedical research. Please refer to the outline on animal experimentation. In the resource material, you will find a sheet of medical conclusions from animal research. Several of these are worth quoting to the students to explain the variety of ways primates are used. Collect stories, information, and data on biomedical research using

primates by reading the books suggested in the resources, and share this information. The videos *Breaking Barriers*, *Unnecessary Fuss*, and *Britches* (all available from PETA) are pertinent to this topic. *Breaking Barriers* shows the caging and living conditions of the animals and provides information about their treatment, rather than an actual experiment, while *Unnecessary Fuss* is footage from head injury experiments on baboons filmed by the researchers themselves. *Britches* shows a rescued baby monkey and explains the experiment she underwent and has a happy ending. Become acquainted with all the relevant details about these videos so that you can discuss them thoroughly and provide follow-up information.



5. **Activity: The Presidential Commission** Should primates, or the great apes in particular, be used in biomedical research, entertainment and in the pet trade, or should they have

rights, similar to children, which protect them from harm and exploitation? This question is being addressed by the Great Ape Project, whose goal is to gain protection for the great apes through legislation. You can do the presidential commission the same way as you did for *Marine Mammals*.

#### F. Human Overpopulation:

1. **Opening Video:** *Population Bomb* - this video shows in just a few minutes the rate at which people are populating the planet. It is a brief, but powerful and shocking introduction to the topic of human population

2. Compare family size and environmental impact: a child born in the United States consumes anywhere from 10 times to 50 times the amount of resources as a child born in a poorer country. This means that it is neither fair nor worthwhile to criticize people in other countries for having many children, while arguing that one's family in the United States includes only 2 children. While overpopulation in third world countries is a significant problem (because it contributes to deforestation for fuel, habitat destruction, etc.), it is also a big problem in wealthy countries in which children grow up to become excessive consumers. In addition, our culture is rapidly influencing other cultures and is exporting our products - including many useless, resource-laden, unhealthy and cruel items - to third world countries. As the economies in poorer countries improve, and as people in these countries adopt American values of consumerism, our planet will face an even greater threat.

3. **Video Options:** For a longer class period the film *World War III* is an excellent overview of population issues (60 minutes). For a shorter class period, the high-school oriented *Jam Packed* is best (30 minutes).

#### 4. **Activity: Presidential Commission** -

Like the previous presidential commissions, you can use this format to discuss whether or not the United States government should issue a proclamation calling for voluntary adherence to a 2-child family. (Some students may wish to discuss whether this should be a law, as it is in China. This will spark a good discussion of freedom and liberty versus planetary survival and community well-being.)

5. Ask students to determine for themselves what they believe to be the most ethical choice regarding family planning. Invite them to share their opinions.

6. Discuss other ways to reduce the impact of human population (vegan diet, consuming less, recycling, reusing, living in an energy-efficient and/or renewable energy home, etc.).

7. End with guided imagery that invites students to make a promise to reduce their impact on the Earth.