

Wildlife Song, Poem, or Rap

Grades 4-8

These species are of aesthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people.

—*Endangered Species Act*

Wild creatures and places have inspired human creativity for centuries. From paintings to poems and books to songs, we have always been deeply affected by the beauty of nature. Yet few of us realize how useful and necessary the living network around us really is. While a poet may compare the beauty of a flower to a loved one, a scientist may isolate a life-saving chemical from that very same plant. This activity will give students the opportunity to express their new knowledge and appreciation of Tennessee's endangered and threatened species and ecosystems and their values by writing and performing a song, poem, or rap.

Objective

Students will be able to (1) communicate information they have learned about Tennessee's endangered and threatened species and ecosystems and (2) describe their importance to humans.

Age

Grades 4-8

Time

One or two class periods of 50 minutes.

Correlation

Grade 4

C: Life Science
D: Earth Science
E: Science and Technology
F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives
G: History and Nature of Science

Grades 5-8

C: Life Science
F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives

Materials

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Tape recorder (optional)
- Video camera (optional)

Preparation

For maximum effectiveness, the "Focus on Concepts," "Focus on Species," "Focus on Ecosystems," and "Focus on Connections" activities should precede this activity. Review the "Background Information" section of this guide for information regarding the many different values of wildlife, pgs. 13-14.

To help give students ideas, provide them music to one or two of the songs students enjoy in class. For poetry examples, refer to Project Learning Tree or Project Wild activity books.

Procedure

1. Facilitate a discussion with the class about the many values of wildlife, plants, and ecosystems. Review the different ways endangered and threatened species contribute to our world and the roles they play in their ecosystems.

2. Consider the following values (described in the "Background Information" section of this guide) during the discussion:

- Medicinal (*Vinca*, *Echinacea*, aspirin, penicillin, spruce-fir moss spider venom, etc.)
- Industrial (carageenan, jojoba, etc.)
- Agricultural (integrated pest management, bats, food crops, sunflowers, etc.)
- Economic (\$101 billion spent in 1996 on wildlife, freshwater mussels, ginseng, etc.)
- Aesthetic (paintings, photography, etc.)

- Recreational (hiking, bird watching, fishing, boating, etc.)
- Historical (national parks, national forests, relict ecosystems, etc.)
- Ecological (every species has its own role in an ecosystem, interconnectedness, etc.)
- Environmental indicators (species decline is a warning that our environment needs help — peregrine falcons and DDT, freshwater mussels, etc.)
- What benefits do you get from healthy ecosystems?
- What beauty do you see in nature? (color, texture, tree shape, fur)
- What excites you about nature? (lightening, snow, springtime, wildlife)
- What action, object, or place makes you feel connected to nature? (fishing, beach, walking in the woods, star gazing)

Brainstorm with the class a comprehensive list of the values of wildlife, plants, and ecosystems, and write, or have the students write, this list on the board.

3. Create a Wildlife Song, Poem, or Rap!

Teachers can work with younger students to create a song, poem, or rap about the values of wildlife, plants, and ecosystems. Students can perform their creation, taking turns singing verses. Consider choreographing it with actions taken from the activity *Focus on Species: Becoming*.

Older students can work in small groups to write a song, poem, or rap about the values of wildlife, plants, and ecosystems. Have students perform and choreograph their creations.

Ask students to incorporate answers to 3 of the following questions in their song, poem, or rap:

- What benefits do wild plants and animals provide to people?
- What nonliving parts in the ecosystem do we share?
- How are people connected/ dependant on plants, animals, and healthy ecosystems?

Extensions

1. Consider recording or videotaping the performances for future classes.
2. This is a great activity for Earth Day, April 22; the class could present their creations to parents, other classes, or the entire school.

Evaluation

Facilitate a discussion with the class on endangered and threatened species, ecosystems, and their values. Encourage students to discuss what they have learned and how they will work to help endangered and threatened species in the future.

You will be taken to the file about that particular species. A picture will be shown if one is available. Links to other Internet sources that describe the species will also be You