

# Why Are They Endangered?

## Grades: 3-5

Many classes include a unit on endangered animals. Very often students are asked to do a research report on a specific endangered animal. This activity is designed to complement and can be used as a “kick off” for such a study. This activity asks students to think about the reasons **WHY** animals become endangered. More importantly, it asks students to think about what changes they can make in their lives to help these species.

## Objective:

### Affective:

- Students will develop a sense of responsibility for the earth and its other inhabitants.

### Academic:

- Students will be able to identify reasons why animals become endangered.
- Students will be able to identify what changes they can make in their own lives to help endangered species.

**Materials:** “endangered reasons” cards (cut out), chalkboard, poster board and markers or computer with *PrintShop*, *Publisher*, or similar software, chart paper, “Let’s Think About It! – Endangered Animals” student sheet

## Motivation:



Distribute one card to each student or pair of students.

Go around the room having students read their cards.

Pose the question: *What do you think these cards are?*

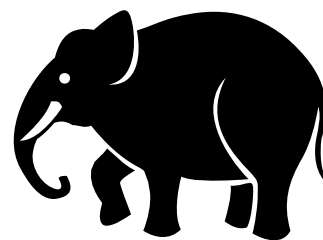
Allow students a few minutes to walk around and share their cards with each other before eliciting responses.

Answer: *Reasons why animals become endangered.*

## Procedure:

### Mini-Lesson:

- 1) Write “Caused by Humans” on one side of the chalkboard (or hang a sign on one side of the room). On the other side of the chalkboard or room, write “Not Caused By Humans.”
- 2) Ask students to think about the reason printed on their card and decide whether it is caused by humans or not.



- 3) Let each student take a turn reading his/her reason aloud, explaining what it means, and giving an example if they can think of one – let the rest of the class help as needed. \*The student should then tell if humans **are** or **are not the cause** and go stand by the corresponding sign.
- 4) Record student responses on chart paper.

Small-Group Activity:

When all students have taken their turn, put students into small groups to discuss and respond in writing to questions on “Let’s Think About It! – Endangered Animals” student sheet.



**Summary:**

Discuss the activity as a whole class.

Questions for Discussion:

- *How did the activity make you feel?*
- *Did you learn anything new about endangered animals?*
- Discuss question #4 and #5 on the “Let’s Think About It! – Endangered Animals” student sheet. This will help students to relate the information learned in this activity to their everyday lives.

*Note to Teacher: If students need direction in answering question #5, here is a suggestion. Since humans threaten endangered animals by our choices of what we eat (i.e., sea animals caught in commercial fishing drift nets) and use (i.e. logging for excessive amounts of virgin paper), what changes could you make as an individual to help these animals?*



**Follow-up Activities:**

- Have students choose one of the changes people can make to help endangered animals and create a poster or sign to educate others about what they can do to help endangered or threatened animals. (This can be an opportunity to integrate technology. Students can create signs on the computer in programs such as *PrintShop* or *Microsoft Publisher*.)
- Join an online project!

**Endangered Species** [www.schoolworld.asn.au/species/species.html](http://www.schoolworld.asn.au/species/species.html)


Students select an endangered or threatened mammal, reptile, insect, or plant about which they conduct research and submit a report for sharing with learners, worldwide through the SchoolWorld Web site. All grades, ages, groups – Ongoing, may join at any time.

**The Endangered Animals of the World**

[www.tenan.vuurwerk.nl/](http://www.tenan.vuurwerk.nl/)

This project is designed to help students gain skills in researching, collaborating and telecommunicating while learning about

## Literature Connections



★ *And Then There Was One - The Mysteries of Extinction*  
by Margery Facklam

★ *Will We Miss Them?*  
by Alexander Wright

★ *Gone Forever! An Alphabet of Extinct Animals*  
by Sandra & William Markle

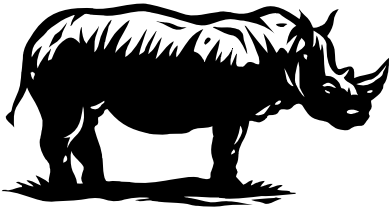
(See appendix for annotated bibliography.)

endangered animals, and sharing that information with the world.

- Read Aloud books that can help you explore the issues of endangered animals and extinction with your students.

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants**



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service web site  
[endangered.fws.gov/wildlife.html#Species](http://endangered.fws.gov/wildlife.html#Species)

**Endangered! Exploring a World at Risk** - companion site to an American Museum of Natural History exhibition covering endangered animals and habitats, causes, and more.  
[www.amnh.org/nationalcenter/Endangered/index.html](http://www.amnh.org/nationalcenter/Endangered/index.html)

### **New York State Standards Addressed:**

*ELA Standard 1 – Language for Information and Understanding* – Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

#### Listening and Reading

1. Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.

#### Speaking and Writing

1. Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information requires asking probing and clarifying questions, interpreting information in one's own words, applying information from one context to another, and presenting the information and interpretation clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly.

*ELA Standard 4 - Language for Social Interaction* – Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

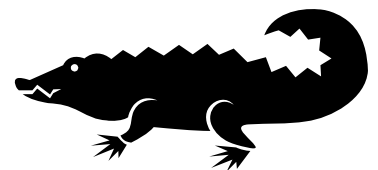
#### Listening and Speaking

Oral Communication in formal and informal settings require the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures, to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect on how talk varies in different situations.

*MST Standard 4 – Science* – Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science.

#### The Living Environment

Living things are both similar to and different from each other and nonliving things.





## Why Are They Endangered?

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Cut out cards for use with the “*Why are They Endangered?*” activity.

**Overcollecting  
by people**

**Predators**

**Clearing of  
forests**

**Overkilling**

**Pesticides**

**Overgrazing**

**Skins used for  
boots and shoes**

**Skins used  
for belts**

**Skins used  
for fur coats**

**Ivory used  
for carvings**

dam building

declining frequency  
of wildfires

Oil used for  
cosmetics

Used for food

Used for  
medicine

Killed as pests

Oil spills

Fishing nets

Used for  
jewelry

Chemicals  
in water

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Group: \_\_\_\_\_

## LET'S THINK ABOUT IT! ENDANGERED ANIMALS



Discuss the following questions with your group. Write the answers below.

1) How did this activity make you feel? Why?

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2) Are you surprised about how many of the reasons why animals are endangered are caused by humans? Why?

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3) Do you think it is important to know why animals become endangered?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**Explain why you think this.**

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**4) Can you think of changes people can make to help endangered animals? Explain.**

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**5) Can you think of changes YOU can make in your own life that can help endangered animals? Explain.**

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## Threats to Endangered Animals

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This list was compiled from the information at *Endangered! Exploring a World at Risk*, the companion site to an American Museum of Natural History exhibition, covering endangered animals and habitats, causes, and more. Visit the site at: [www.amnh.org/nationalcenter/Endangered/index.html](http://www.amnh.org/nationalcenter/Endangered/index.html)

### **Leatherback Sea Turtle**

**Threats:** Loss of habitat, killed as pests

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**Threats:** Coastal habitat loss, commercial fishing (caught in drift nets), egg poaching

### **Ora (Komodo Island Monitor or Komodo Dragon)**

**Threats :** Hunting, poisoning, reduction of prey species, human encroachment

### **Indian Python**

**Threats:** habitat loss through land cleared for farming, illegal hunting for skin

### **Galapagos Giant Tortoise**

**Threats:** Hunting, poisoning, reduction of prey species, human encroachment

### **American Crocodile**

**Threats:** habitat destruction, illegal hunting for hide

### **Goliath Frog**

**Threats:** habitat loss through deforestation, dam building, private collectors

### **Cheetah**

**Threats:** habitat modification, loss of prey species, poaching

### **Whooping Crane**

**Threats:** habitat loss through land conversion, dredging, dam construction

### **American Peregrine Falcon**

**Threats:** Chemical pollution, habitat encroachment

**Bald Eagle**

**Threats:** Loss of habitat, killed as pests

**California Condor**

**Threats:** habitat alteration, urbanization, poisoning, shooting, colliding into power lines, pesticides, unknown factors

**Black Rhinoceros**

**Threats:** Excessive hunting for horn and other parts, habitat loss

**African Wild Dog**

**Threats:** Introduced disease, poisoning, loss of habitat

**Mountain Gorilla**

**Threats:** poaching, habitat destruction

**Okapi**

**Threats:** habitat destruction, accidental trapping

**Serengeti East African Plains Ungulates**

**Threats:** Loss of habitat owing to human settlement and agricultural expansion, competition for food and water from domestic animals, hunting and poaching, disease

**Dama Gazelle**

**Threats:** habitat alteration, agricultural expansion, competition from domestic stock, excessive hunting

**Kagu**

**Threats:** habitat loss, introduced predators

**Manus Island Tree Snail**

**Threats:** habitat loss by logging, collecting for jewelry

**Endangered and Extinct Birds Hawaii**

**Threats:** Competition and predation from introduced species, habitat modification, disease

**Endangered and Extinct Birds New Zealand**

**Threats:** Introduced competitors and predators

**Bengal Tiger**

**Threats:** poaching, habitat loss, prey reduction

**Asian Elephants**

**Threats:** Urbanization, agriculture

**Northern Spotted Owl**

**Threats:** habitat loss from logging, low population size

**Karner Blue Butterfly**

**Threats:** Urbanization, herbicides, declining frequency of wildfires

**American Burying Beetle**

**Threats:** Overall habitat destruction, possibly DDT and other pesticides.

**Delhi Sands Fly**

**Threats:** Conversion of habitat to agricultural, residential, and commercial use

**Gila Monster**

**Threats:** habitat loss resulting from urban development and road building

**Queen Conch**

**Threats:** overexploitation for food and ornamentals

**Steller's Sea Lion**

**Threats:** Rapidly declining numbers -- cause uncertain

**Woodland Caribou (Osborn's Caribou)**

**Threats:** Loss of habitat, interruption of migratory routes, over hunting

**Gray Wolf**

**Threats:** Hunting, poisoning, persecution, loss of habitat

**Pronghorn**

**Threats:** Illegal hunting, habitat destruction, livestock fences that hinder access to natural ranges

**American Bison (Buffalo)**

**Threats:** Low genetic diversity owing to 19th-century massive population reductions