

A Special Place

(Adapted from *Saving Our Species*, CPAWS, Calgary/ Banff Chapter)

Activity Information

Grade Level: Elementary

Subject Area: Science, Language Arts

Duration: 60 – 100 mins

Group Size: Whole Class

Purpose: To make students aware of the human need for natural areas, to relate our special natural places to animal habitat, and to consider what happens when these special places no longer exist

Teacher's Notes: This activity is divided into three parts with the final part being an outdoor activity. "A Guide to Leading Class Nature Hikes" is included in this resource kit and can help you organize a successful nature hike or field trip.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Appropriate dress for outdoors
- Writing materials
- Wanted: Newfoundland Marten (BLM - 1 per class)
- Newfoundland Marten pictures (opt.)

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Appreciate the need that humans have for natural areas
- Relate human special places to animal habitat
- Explain why animals need special places
- Explain what happens when habitat is lost
- Distinguish between endangered, threatened, special concern and extinct

PROCEDURE:

Part I (Discuss) 15 minutes:

To begin, tell the students about a special place in your life. This could be a favourite spot on one of your favourite walks, or a special place that you liked to visit when you were the same age as your students.

Ask the students to think about a special place they might have in their life. "What is it about this place that makes you feel happy and what do you like most about this place?" Invite students to share their feelings with the class. Make a list of the things that make the areas they chose special to them. Are there certain things that all of these areas have in common?

Part II (Ideas) 20 minutes:

Ask students what the word, "endangered" means to them. Endangered means "to have been put in danger." More simply, it means, "in danger." Use this word in a sentence.

What things might endanger your special place?

What is an endangered species in danger of? An endangered species is in danger of becoming extinct. Ask students to define "extinct." Tell students that when all the members of an animal species die, that animal is said to be extinct. When the number of animals is low enough so that the species is in danger of becoming extinct, the species is endangered. As animals are protected, or become more endangered they can move up and down through the at risk categories. A threatened species is not in immediate danger of extinction; however their population is seeing a downward trend. A species of special concern may have declining numbers or may have specific threats to its population that need to be monitored.

Show the class the Newfoundland Marten BLM, other pictures of the Newfoundland marten, if available, and tell them its story. The Newfoundland marten is an indigenous species in Newfoundland and unique to the Island. It was listed as an endangered species for many years; in 2006, was down-listed to threatened. Its special place is old growth boreal forest, and there is not much of this forest type left on the island portion of Newfoundland.

Old growth forest is an area of forest that has never had trees cut down and removed nor experienced a full burn-over. These forests are full of trees in all stages of life including old trees that have fallen naturally creating homes and hiding places for the marten and its prey. Such places can be found near Terra Nova National Park in the east, and around Main River and Little Grand Lake on the west coast of the island. Emphasize to the students that if their own special place were to be taken away, they would still survive, but if an animal like the Newfoundland marten can't live in its special place and meet its needs there, it will not be able to survive.

Ask students to make a list of all the things they need to survive. Record all the answers on the board and then ask students to identify which of those needs that a wild animal also has. Whether or not animals share the same psychological needs as humans (i.e. love, togetherness, etc.) will make for an interesting discussion!

Students should realize that wild animals and humans share the same fundamental physical needs of food, water, shelter, air, and space.

What if you lost your home? What would happen then? What would you do? This question is designed to get students thinking about something that we all have and we all need: our home. Just like any other animal, humans need food, water, and shelter to survive; we can find these things in everyone's home. If a student were to lose their home, and couldn't find anyone to go and live with, they would be in serious trouble indeed.

Help the class make a list of threats to the province's natural habitats. The list might include things such as logging, cabin building, roads, mining, ATVs and river pollution.

Many plants and animals on earth are in serious trouble because they have lost their homes, and for lots of other reasons. If a single animal loses its home and has nowhere else to go, it dies; if enough of these animals lose their homes, then the species is in danger of becoming endangered, and perhaps going extinct.

Part III (Outdoors) 15 To 35 minutes:

Tell your students that you are about to take them to a large natural area that is one of your special places to visit. Choose a natural area, preferably within walking distance of your school. (Note: *The Guide to Leading Class Nature Hikes, included in this toolkit, will help you organize your field trip.*)

At the area, invite students to find a place that they like or feel is special. Remember to set a boundary on how far they can go. Have them sit in their special place and write about how that place makes them feel (this could be a drawing, a poem, or a few paragraphs).

Part IV (Evaluate) 5 minutes:

To conclude, ask students to tell what they like most about nature. Ask how it makes them feel to be part of nature?

Extension Activities:

1. Write a story or sketch a map of your special place.
2. Draw a picture of your special place, including the plants and animals that live there.

