

Endangered Species Day

| Activity Kit



Childhood
by Nature



A resource-rich kit to help children learn about endangered species with fun hands-on activities.

Hello!

About this Kit

Thank you for downloading this Endangered Species Day Activity Kit. We created this resource to help homeschoolers, adult caregivers, or educators bring awareness of endangered species to young naturalists. As always, Childhood by Nature believes that education and engaging activities will help children become more in tune with the natural world, and thus, stronger stewards of it.

This packet is organized with basic information on the topic of endangered species, along with a week full of endangered species learning and activities leading up to Endangered Species Day, which is on Friday, May 19, 2022. Our hope is that a child's enthusiasm for endangered species extends beyond Endangered Species Day and becomes a part of a young naturalist's life year-round!



About Endangered Species

African savanna elephant. Florida panther. Chimpanzee. Each of these are beautiful, amazing creatures. Sadly, they are also considered endangered or critically endangered and at risk of disappearing from this planet forever. The fact is that many species that inhabit this planet today, both well-known and still undiscovered by humans, may not be here in the near or distant future.

People are taking a toll on this planet in ways that are serious and permanent. There has been an astonishing 60% decline in the size of populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians in just over 40 years. We need to conserve all of the critters that we can. And we need to help children learn about nature, especially its most vulnerable members.



Endangered species are plant and animal species that are in danger of becoming extinct, while threatened species are species at risk of becoming endangered.

It's important to prevent species from becoming endangered. From providing cures to deadly diseases to maintaining natural ecosystems and improving overall quality of life, the benefits of preserving threatened and endangered species are invaluable. Once a species is gone, it's gone forever. This not only has consequences throughout ecosystems and the planet but it is also, in our times, a testament to how poorly humans are treating other species who share this planet with us.



There are many reasons why animals and plants become endangered or die out altogether. Rarely, a drastic and sudden change in the environment causes a mass extinction. Around 65 million years ago, a large meteor hit Earth and contributed to the mass extinction of over 50% of species alive at the time.

Today, anywhere from 100 to 10,000 species go extinct each year. This is 100 to 1,000 times faster than historic extinction rates. Our current extinction crisis is most likely the result of human activity, especially over the past century. Species can become extinct when humans over hunt and over fish, pollute the environment, destroy habitats, and introduce new species to areas.

Since humans are responsible for the demise of so many species, it is our responsibility to take action to prevent such drastic losses.

Did you know that humanity's destruction of habitats and biodiversity is the primary reason animals and plants become endangered?

What is the Endangered Species Act?

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is the federal law that protects vulnerable populations of species. It was signed into law by President Richard Nixon on December 28, 1973.

Through conservation and recovery programs, the Endangered Species Act provides a program for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitats in which they are found. Species include birds, insects, fish, reptiles, mammals, crustaceans, flowers, grasses, and trees.

A species can be listed as endangered at the state, federal, and international level. On the federal level in the United States, the list of species considered endangered is managed under the Endangered Species Act.



What is Endangered Species Day?

Endangered Species Day is an annual celebration to learn about endangered and threatened species and what we can do to help them. It is celebrated on the third Friday in May. Endangered Species Day is coordinated by the Endangered Species Coalition.

On Endangered Species Day, wildlife refuges, zoos, aquariums, gardens, schools, libraries, museums, community groups, nonprofits, and individuals hold special programs or events for people of all ages.

Endangered Species Day is an excellent opportunity for young naturalists to learn about endangered species and take actions to help endangered and threatened species. We hope you and your young naturalists learn and take action to help endangered species with the help of this kit.



Let the Fun Begin!

Activities for Learning About Endangered Species

There are many ways for a young naturalist to celebrate Endangered Species Day. From writing to activism or art, there's an activity for every young naturalist!

This kit provides 7 days of activities for the week of ESD. You can follow the activities in any order you wish!



Monday

READ & LEARN ABOUT
ENDANGERED SPECIES

One of the very best things you can do to help your children value other species in our world is to learn about them together. A great way to launch Endangered Species Day activities is by having a child focus on an endangered species that they want to learn more about and become an expert in it.

Many children are reluctant readers and maybe even reluctant writers. But there's something about writing about animals that can inspire almost any child. When young naturalists write about a favorite species, they develop crucial research, writing and editing skills.



When choosing the species to focus on, many children will be drawn to the most exotic, mega species like the tiger or red panda. Some of these are among the world's most ecologically, economically, and culturally important species. They very much need the interest and protection of children for their survival. But if children only value charismatic megafauna and pets, they may lose connections to local species and, with that, a willingness to conserve species nearby. Which is why it's important for children to make room for local nature as well—nature that they will have the opportunity to see up close, observe during citizen science projects and help to protect.

The Endangered Species Conservation Site offers several good recommendations for learning more about local species. The site suggests that you contact your office of parks and wildlife management to learn which species are endangered or threatened in your area, as well as which threats it faces.



Once they have selected their species, it's time to research. Encourage the child to read books or articles online about their endangered species; discuss why it is endangered and ideas for how to help protect the species. For books about endangered species, take a look at the Endangered Species Coalition's excellent suggested [reading list](#).

Of course there are numerous excellent online resources to learn about endangered species. We love the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) [Species Directory](#) because it is easy to use and is full of great facts about each species, along with ways to help.

Once they get to the writing, be sure to adapt the goal to their age and writing skill level. They can take a look at a few of Childhood by Nature's [young naturalist-penned pieces](#) for a model. We've even created a few fun templates to help with their researching and writing.



BONUS: ADVOCATE FOR YOUR SPECIES

Now that they have discovered their favorite endangered species, help the young naturalist advocate for their endangered species. Here are a few ways as suggested by the Endangered Species Conservation Site:

- Research local or national or international conservation organizations working to conserve species. Organize a fundraiser or donate birthday money to a local or national conservation organization that helps endangered species.
- Write letters to local government representatives asking them to support legislation to help protect threatened/endangered species.



ENDANGERED SPECIES RESEARCH

Name

Date

Species

Source

Notes



ENDANGERED SPECIES RESEARCH

Name

Date

Species

Source

Notes



ENDANGERED SPECIES RESEARCH

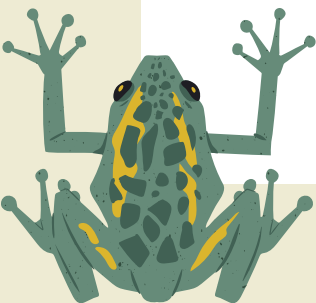
Name

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Tuesday

PLANT A GARDEN

Habitat loss is one of the biggest reasons for the decline in populations of most species. You can make a difference at home by increasing biodiversity and enhancing the lives of pollinators such as insects, birds and other mammals by planting a pollinator-friendly garden. Granted, the scale of the biodiversity crisis is too enormous for one garden or backyard to fix. Still, showing children that a simple act like breaking from the norm of turfgrass lawn is a bold enough act to foster a healthier ecosystem, and influence others. And of course, becoming a backyard naturalist is a great way for a child to play a role and see the impact they can have before their eyes.



If you have a yard and garden, you can help return habitat to birds and other wildlife by planting native plants that provide natural sources of food such as nectar, pollen, fruit, berries, nuts, and seeds. And by using native instead of nonnative fruiting shrubs, you can give birds natural food without having them spread invasive species across the landscape. These plants all attract insects, which are vital to the habitat and provide another high protein food source for backyard birds.

Find more tips for creating your pollinator paradise [here](#). If you don't have a space to grow a garden of your own, you can volunteer to help with a local community garden or a habitat restoration project with your local conservation department.



Wednesday | HEAD OUT ON A NATURE WALK

It's midweek and the young naturalist has been hard at work learning about endangered species and creating a garden haven for local species that are threatened by human development. Now it's time to get outdoors and take it all in! Head out on a nature walk in your local park or conservation area. Take it at your own pace. Never underestimate the ability of a slow, quiet unfocused walk in nature to relax and reconnect us. Or make your walk more focused with species ID goals. Young naturalists may want to create a leaderboard keeping track of all species spotted this week.



Thursday | GET CRAFTY

All children learn differently. Some prefer to read and take in all they can on a subject. While others need to use their hands and their bodies to make the learning stick. For the crafty young naturalist, a craft project to help local species may be just the right way for them to contribute.

A fun project to help offer a sanctuary to beneficial insects, especially pollinators, are insect hotels. These easy to make structures can help provide shelter for insects year-round but are particularly important in the winter. Learn how you and your young naturalist can build a bug hotel [here](#).



Bats are extremely important to the ecosystem. Most are primary predators of night-flying insects, including many that cause enormous agricultural damage. Others are essential pollinators and seed dispersers for a wide variety of plants. Unfortunately, more than half of North America's 47 species are in decline or listed as endangered. The good news is that artificial roosts can help many bat species and making one for your backyard will help your local bats fare better! Learn how to build a [bat house](#).



Friday (ESD)

| CREATE SOME ART

Creating art celebrates the beauty of the natural world. Whether it's sculpture, drawing, painting, ephemeral art such as mandalas, art can help a young naturalist take the time to appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of different species. A great way to participate in Endangered Species Day is with the Endangered Species Coalition's Chalk Art Event. This nationwide, all-ages chalk art competition is open to anyone from wherever they live. The ESC will be giving away a variety of prizes, including a \$250 Grand Prize for the best artwork and a number of small prizes just for participating! Learn more about the event [here](#).



Saturday Sunday

FIND AN ESD EVENT
NEAR YOU!

It's Endangered Species Day weekend and a perfect time to connect with others who share a passion for learning about endangered species and ways they can help. The Endangered Species Day website (www.endangered.org) is full of activities and events listed geographically so you can search the map to find what is perfect for your young naturalist! You can find everything from bird walks, nature hikes, garden plantings and litter clean-ups to zoo and aquarium events, wildlife mural tours, and educational talks and webinars.



More Resources

The [Endangered Species Coalition](#) is the organization behind Endangered Species Day, organizing the map of events happening around the world each year and providing resources and other materials that can be used in ESD celebrations anywhere. You'll find event planning tips, special infographics, stickers, bookmarks, fliers, banners, passports, and coloring and activity sheets, and more. Many of these resources can be downloaded and printed.

[The Endangered Species Conservation Site](#) shares a wide range of ideas for kids to learn more about and help protect endangered species and their habitats.



More Resources (cont'd)

What better way to ensure the help protect endangered species than by encouraging the next generation of conservation scientists? [NOAA](#) introduces your kids to the experts working to save endangered species. Learn about the work of scientists like Allison Henry, a fisheries biologist who works with the large whale team at the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center, collecting critical population data about the North Atlantic right whale.

The World Wildlife Fund does an excellent job connecting educators and parents with the tools and resources they need to help kids explore and understand the world of wildlife. Take a look at the amazing resources in the [Wild Classroom](#) for a wide range of resources and activities to help your child love and learn about many threatened and endangered species.



More Resources (cont'd)

Focus on the positive. It's bad for endangered species but it's not all bad. Thanks to the Endangered Species Act, there are many success stories to celebrate. The National Wildlife Federation has a great presentation of some of these on their website. These stories include efforts to restore Bald Eagles to the current number of 7,000 breeding pairs, the reintroduction of the Gray Wolf to much of its natural habitat, and the effort that led to over 1,400 breeding pairs of Peregrine Falcons in North America.

The IUCN Red List of Threatened SpeciesTM is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species. It uses a set of quantitative criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of species. These criteria are relevant to most species and all regions of the world. With its strong scientific base, the IUCN Red List is recognized as the most authoritative guide to the status of biological diversity.



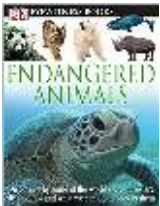
Recommended Books



P is for Pangolin: an alphabet of obscure, endangered & underappreciated animals
Author: Anastasia Kierst



A Wild Child's Guide to Endangered Animals
Author: Millie Marotta



DK Eyewitness Books: Endangered Animals: Discover Why Some of the World's Creatures Are Dying Out and What We Can Do to Protect Them
Author: Ben Hoare



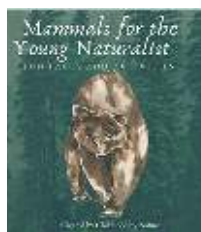
Rare: Portraits of America's Endangered Species
Author: Joel Sartore



Childhood by Nature Books for Raising Young Naturalists



Birds for the Young Naturalist



Mammals for the Young Naturalist



15 Weeks of Nature: A Crash Course for Educating Young Naturalists



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