

Nature Activities—December

Wildlife decline is not just a local or national issue— it is a worldwide problem, so to introduce the topic of wildlife conservation and endangered species, you could start with a worldwide overview of well known endangered species and reasons behind their decline – habitat loss, poaching etc.

WWF has some great resources on global wildlife conservation issues. If you were wanting to start the topic you could plan a fun endangered animal themed Christmas party for the kids this year, the link provided details some ideas for animal themed games:

<https://dq8xshlfi7cu0.cloudfront.net/20170620152538/Wear-it-Wild-kids-party-kit-2017.pdf>

You can get the children to design their own wildlife mask as part of the day:

<https://dq8xshlfi7cu0.cloudfront.net/20170912152259/Wear-it-Wild-recycled-mask1.pdf>

Or if you want to be a UK themed wildlife Christmas party, here are some native themed masks:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/activities/search/?query=mask&sortby=date&count=10&activitySeason=10001606>
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Zoo Debate

Wildlife conservation is a very current political issue. One of the most contentious issues in connecting with wildlife is whether zoos are good or bad, and having a discussion on this subject is a great way to get children to practise skills in listening, speaking, structuring arguments and taking turns fairly. It is useful to have clear classroom debate rules in place before starting this session and debate can be linked into usual classroom practices.

For the debate, either provide comments to discuss (suitable for younger groups) or allow teams to research their own arguments in preparation for a debate.

For older children, and especially the very opinionated, arguing against your own real beliefs can be a useful exercise — not least in knowing your enemy!

The arguments for and against zoos can be adapted to your group from here: <https://www.thoughtco.com/arguments-for-and-against-zoos-127639>



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Zoo debate continued.....

After the debate you can encourage the students to produce their own persuasive writing, in the form of a catchy concluding headline and statement, and these can even be uploaded online to support their argument, along with a vote at [debate.org](https://www.debate.org/opinions/do-you-think-zoos-are-good-for-animals-yes-or-bad-no):

<https://www.debate.org/opinions/do-you-think-zoos-are-good-for-animals-yes-or-bad-no>

Alternatively, a comprehension task on zoos can be found here, along with a true or false quiz:

learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening/upper-intermediate-b2-listening/are-zoos-good-thing

For younger groups, a simple discussion about hunting might give an alternative activity:

<http://www.allaboutanimals.org.uk/PK-Hunting.asp>



Nature Activities—December

Connecting with nature doesn't have to be limited to the summer months, you can use plants and foliage to get creative in December in lots of different ways:

- Get creative and be inspired by daily plant art direct to your email inbox daily for December from 'Grow wild flowers to the people', by Kew Royal Botanical Gardens. You can use these in art lessons or for a daily starter. To sign up please go to: <https://www.growwilduk.com/december-calendar>
- Make your own woodland spirit out of natural materials (instructions and more at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/activities/2017/01/woodland-spirits-and-the-green-man/> and then get the children to make their own woodland fairy tale, to act out or write down.
- Make your own winter woodland scene to house a woodland fairy, add little homes for wildlife such as for hibernating animals, hedgehogs, mice, etc. If you would like to make a hogitat, instructions can be found online, such as: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/activities/2017/07/build-a-hedgehog-home/>



Nature Activities—December

United Nations Sustainability Goals



The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals link global challenges we all face and structure ways in which we can find solutions. Lots of organisations use them to talk about the work they are doing around poverty, health, gender equality and education, but also climate action, life on land and in the seas, energy and production. They can form a great way to start talking about international efforts to work to a better future. The UN's own website is a great starting place for this: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> with facts and figures, targets, 'why it matters' sheets and links to follow.

You can download a Sustainable Goals in Action app from <https://sdgsinaction.com/> which gives you news and ideas and allows you to create and join events.



Literacy Activities—December

The topic of conservation of habitats and wildlife is has inspired some brilliant books, both fiction and non-fiction. Some fiction books include:

'Tidy' by Emily Gravitt is a great book to read with younger children, and has lots of resources around habitat destruction:

<https://www.emilygravett.com/activities/tidy-teachers-notes-and-activities>

Charlie and Lola: <https://subsaga.com/bbc/childrens/charlie-and-lola/series-3/25-i-am-going-to-save-a-panda.html>

Grandpa Christmas by Michael Morpurgo: <https://www.michaelmorpurgo.com/book/grandpa-christmas/>

For older children, **Hoot by Carl Hiasen** is very funny; it deals with bullying, friends, enemies and conserving a colony of burrowing owls:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoot_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoot_(novel))

Dear Greenpeace by Simon James comes in letter form so can be used as a base for learning about letter writing:

<https://www.teachingideas.co.uk/library/books/dear-greenpeace>

Write to an MP about conservation for UK wildlife in general, or specifically of a species you care about. Depending on the age of the children, they may wish to write a class letter or independent letters. The People's Manifesto for Wildlife (<http://www.chrispackham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Peoples-Manifesto-Download.pdf>) can be sent with your cover letter, examples found here: <https://www.rdsconservation.com/?p=654>



Maths Activities—December

Infographics are a great way to make numerical data immediately accessible. Try creating infographics to inspire a conservation message. You can find some great examples to inspire you at: <https://www.savingspecies.org/top-10-biodiversity-conservation-infographics/>

Information about ten of the most endangered UK species can be found at: <https://www.countryfile.com/wildlife/10-of-the-most-endangered-animal-species-in-britain/>

Information files of UK mammals can be found at: <https://ptes.org/get-informed/facts-figures/>

The comprehensive list of endangered animals is produced by the International Union for Conservation of Natural and Natural Resources (IUCN) and is called the Red List. You can find the listing at <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>. This is quite dense and information packed; linking into the zoo activities, you can find how the Zoological Society of London use the Red List at <https://www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/london-online-resources/iucn-red-list>



Art, Arts Award — December

Create endangered animal art or habitat art:

For younger students you can create animal 'feely art' or habitat 'feely squares' using different colour materials such as felt and faux fur and tissue papers. Alternatively you collect natural materials like leaves and pine cones and can make animal leaf art such as :

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/569705421610172317>

For older students you can encourage them to collect recycled materials such as plastics and bring them in to make a 'sustainable sculpture' of a endangered north east species. Some starter images can be found at:

<https://lesliethissen.wordpress.com/2013/05/24/15-eco-arts-recycled-sculptures/>

Or at:

<https://www.upcyclist.co.uk/2018/02/plastic-bottle-art-installation/>

If you are wanting to learn more about conservation art, here is a good article on artists using conservation and sustainability:

[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/environmental-art_n_5585288?](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/environmental-art_n_5585288?guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvLnVrLw&guce_referrer_cs=yVsQDkU5QKHvD60_qstEQQ)

[guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvLnVrLw&guce_referrer_cs=yVsQDkU5QKHvD60_qstEQQ](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/environmental-art_n_5585288?guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvLnVrLw&guce_referrer_cs=yVsQDkU5QKHvD60_qstEQQ)



Art, Arts Award — December

A good Discover or Explore challenge would be to visit to Natural Northumbria gallery and then ‘discover’ the work of natural illustrators, such as: <https://www.illustrationweb.com/styles/animals>.

David Green is from the North East, and his illustrated notebooks can be found at the Natural History society of Northumbria: <http://www.nhsn.ncl.ac.uk/resources/archive/naturalists-of-the-north-east/david-green/>.

You can then ‘explore’ responses to wildlife illustration through making a UK endangered wildlife book with illustrations: You can set a task for the class to research and create their own book on endangered species *from the UK*. Each child could have a different species and would find out information then create a illustration of the animal with facts, or create their own book, for example choosing their top 5 animals, or choosing a particular habitat and explaining which endangered species are found there. This can be adapted to lower abilities by providing printed out sentences about the animals they can choose from, which the children can edit, by cutting and arranging as they choose, sticking them on different pages in their books alongside the illustrations.

A good place to find endangered UK animals to choose from is here: <https://findingnature.co.uk/endangered-animals-britain/>

People’s Trust for Endangered Animals has some great educational resources and information on endangered UK mammals available at: <https://ptes.org/get-informed/education-resources/>



Crest Awards — December

Crest Awards (<https://www.crestawards.org/>) are run by the British Science Association and support science work and working scientifically. Star level is aimed at KS1; Superstar at KS2 and Discovery at KS3 and all have pre-made downloadable challenges which you can put together to achieve the awards. Beyond that, Bronze, Silver and Gold levels give more scope for individual projects. We are working to produce a Crest accredited challenge for when you visit Dippy at the Great North Museum: Hancock to make up one of these activities on your journey. The awards are cheap to do (£1 per child for Star and Superstar and £3 each for Discovery) and you can record the activities online to get the children's certificates and badges.

Conservation challenges

Star (<https://www.crestawards.org/crest-star>)

Superstar (<https://www.crestawards.org/crest-superstar>)

Recycle, Reuse



Things to look out for in December

Feed the birds



Look for evergreen plants like holly and Mistletoe



Flocks of rooks and crows



At the Farnes and along the coast grey seals have had their pups—'white coats'



Wading birds are a spectacular display with hundreds of birds congregating to feed in Estuaries and rocky shores.

