



Teacher's Notes: Assembly Eng/Wales/NI: 5-11, Scot: 5-12-year-olds

This assembly has been written to introduce 5- to 12-year-olds to the topic of endangered species and to the role of Muscular Dystrophy Campaign as a charity.

There are suggested music and pause points for inclusion in the assembly, which can be developed or left out to suit the timing and age of audience as appropriate. Simply begin by sharing the poem below then work through the assembly story, pausing, if desired, where indicated to ask pupils to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Using the lesson activities, factsheets and information about the work of the charity, available on our website (<http://pavementart.muscular-dystrophy.org/ypac/index.asp>) you can extend the exploration of the endangered species topic into individual classrooms to support your Young Pavement Artists Competition entry.

Endangered Species Assembly

Suggested Music to come in to: The Circle of Life (Elton John)

Ode to Extinction

Hungry and tired I raised my weary head towards the strange and unfamiliar sounds that grew closer by the day.
All I could smell was alien and frightening, sawdust and sweat, the smell of the humans who threaten my very existence.
Soon there would be no tall trees, with their luscious green leaves and sweet, juicy figs and without them no food and no home.
So, with my baby clinging tight to my thick dark orange fur, I headed deeper into the rainforest in search of what I could only hope was a safe place to live.....

Pause Point 1: What is this poem about?

The poem is written from the point of view of an orangutan living in a place called Borneo in South East Asia. There are an estimated 55,000 orangutans left in Borneo.

Pause Point 2: Do you think that 55,000 is many or not many? Why?

Borneo is the only place remaining in South-East Asia where forests can still be conserved on a very large scale, but despite this the forests are under threat. As with

many tropical areas around the world, the trees are being cut down and taken for commercial uses including making rubber, palm oil and paper. Borneo's forests have been cleared at a rate of six football pitches a day.

Pause Point 3: Just close your eyes for a minute and imagine how many trees that would be *(use your playing field or playground as a reference if this helps the children to visualise the vastness of the deforestation).*

If this continues at the same rate, it is predicted that even large populations of orangutans could be driven to extinction within the next 50 years, which is a shorter time than the average orangutan's lifespan.

Pause Point 4: What does extinction mean?

There are many animals in the world which face extinction, not all them because of deforestation, or habitat loss like the orangutan.

Pause point 5: Can you think of other causes of extinction?

Global warming and climate change is the most recent threat to all creatures on earth. 'Global warming' is the term used to describe the change in temperature across the world, which has led to extreme weather conditions and an overall change in the climate across the globe. The main cause for these dramatic worldwide changes is thought to be the increase in use of greenhouse gases in the high-tech industrialised modern world.

Pollution is clearly linked to global warming, but also includes accidents that cause environmental disasters, such as oil tanker spillages in the sea that result in loss of many species of sea birds; and chemical pollution of rivers by factories, where all plants and animals that come into contact with the pollutant die.

Biodiversity is the fine balance between different animals that are interdependent upon one another for life. If for some reason this balance is upset, for example, by the introduction of another animal species, then this can lead to the extinction of the original animals or species in an environment. *(A good example of this is the introduction of the grey squirrel to the UK, which virtually wiped out the native red variety.)*

Overexploitation of natural resources through unsustainable hunting, fishing, or extracting raw material is a key cause of extinction. As well as reducing the number of animals hunted, it also affects the balance of that specie's bio-diversity, where other animals suffer because of the vast reduction in numbers of another. *(A good example of this would be over fishing, which has lead to a dramatic population loss of large, predatory fish such as tuna, marlin, swordfish and cod, which we prize for food.)*

Tourism is probably not something you would have thought of as threatening endangered species. However, many animals are killed for their skins, furs, tusks

and even body parts, which are sold illegally each year to be made into souvenirs and fashion accessories for the tourist trade. Some animals are even hunted and killed for their babies, in particular, monkeys, chimpanzees, orang-utans and bears, for the entertainment of tourists in circuses and for beach photos. These baby animals are often ill treated and disposed of when they become adults and lose their cute appeal or are too strong to handle.

Pause point 6: What do all these causes have in common?

Many different species and sub-species of animals are endangered or have already become extinct because of humans. We are the most successful species on the planet and as such we are the biggest threat to everything else – from the lifestyle we lead and the food we eat to the holiday souvenirs we buy.

Pause point 7: What makes man the most successful species?

Man has developed so many things to help the human race survive. We have homes that are heated to keep us warm when it is cold. We do not rely on a specific habitat - humans live all over the world – and we adapt to differences in climate and eat whatever is locally available. We have developed medicines to help us when we are sick and established charities to support those in need.

Pause point 8: What do you know about charities?

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign is a national charity that provides free care and support for babies, children and adults with muscle disease. This year its Young Pavement Artists Competition challenges you to 'Make it a jungle out there' by turning the pavement or playground into your canvas and expressing your thoughts on endangered species.'

Pause Point 9: Reflect upon how lucky we are that we are so well provided for and consider those less fortunate than ourselves, including those animals and plants endangered by our own greed.

Suggested music to leave by: Wonderful World (Louis Armstrong)

(Back in class, discuss what pupils could draw in their pavement art and/or develop the topic of endangered species)