

LESSON 12 How Do We Protect Our Home? =====

Objectives

When students have completed this lesson, they will be able to:

- define a balanced ecosystem in terms of stable population sizes;
- list ways an ecosystem can get out of balance;
- explain what is meant by endangered species and give examples of these species;
- explain the connection between air pollution and global warming.

Exploring Science / Historical Steps

Bald eagles are just one of many species that scientists are trying to help save from extinction by protecting their environment. Much later, in Unit 7 Lesson 1 (page 169), students will learn how other rare and wild animals are being helped by wildlife biologists.

Motivated students might be enticed to read Rachel Carson's classic Silent Spring, and then to meet and discuss this famous book. The biomagnification of DDT should remind students of the story of Minamata Bay (page 20) with its tragic biomagnification of mercury.

You might recommend Jane Goodall's The Book of Hope - A Survival Guide for Trying Times. Students would particularly benefit from reading the section entitled *The Power of Young People* (pages 111 - 134).

In the lesson itself, students will learn some causes of destruction of ecosystems, and steps we can take to make things better.

The answer to the inference question is B. (wetlands).

To Protect Life, Protect Ecosystems

Students should recall (from Lesson 10) the way that the populations of lynxes and hares are related. Although the numbers in a population fluctuate, over long periods of time the average size of each species' population (in a community) remains about the same - unless there is an upset in the balance. Unfortunately, too often humans are upsetting the balance.

Some may argue that extinctions are natural; this is certainly true - for some extinctions. The key is to point out that the extinctions of recent years are absolutely not natural; they are largely the result of our actions.

The link between pollution and global warming should become obvious to students. Hopefully, there will be little (or no) resistance to accepting the facts and supporting efforts to address this serious problem.

You might suggest that - for most Americans - a reduction in meat consumption would help to protect the planet. Meat is certainly a good source of protein (see page 80), one of the vital nutrients for young bodies. However, the amount of meat now being consumed, particularly in our country, has many environmental drawbacks: methane gas (44 pounds per cow per day); water waste (600 gallons consumed to make one hamburger); nitrate pollution from runoff (particularly from feedlots); fuel consumption to raise crops to feed cattle and pork (most of our corn and soybeans are fed to cattle); pollution from the runoff of pesticides and herbicides added to farmland.

It is vital that students hear the message that humans have the power to change their behavior and to solve the problems that we have created, particularly in democratic nations - where individuals can vote for leaders who acknowledge facts, recognize challenges and allocate the resources to address them.

To Do Yourself

This activity can be done either before or after the main lesson. Using a magnifier, students can observe the smaller particles that can collect on the test-strips, especially near the beginning of the period of time when the activity is carried out. Even if the strips darken only slightly, particles may be seen under the magnifier, a stereoscope, or the low power of a compound microscope.

Questions

Please see below.

Review

Please note: I have not made the answers available online, in the small chance that a student might discover them. Of course, the answers to these questions will be included in the version of the Teacher's Guide provided to teachers who purchase the text.