

ANIMALS AND THEIR HABITATS:

Where do our favourite animals live?

Unit overview

This unit gives a geographical context to children's interests in, and prior knowledge of, animals through a study of five continents. It looks at pandas, penguins, sharks and elephants, as well as lesser-known birds, such as the swallow. The unit also focuses the children on specific landscapes, people and issues associated with real places. It starts by showing what these animals' homes are like and addressing misconceptions they might have. It offers a chance to introduce North and South America, which is studied in the KS2 Geography Programme of Study.

Knowledge, skills and concepts

In this unit, the children will:

- name and locate the world's seven continents and five oceans
- use world maps, atlases and globes to identify countries, continents and oceans
- use simple fieldwork and observational skills.

Background information

Children will be used to seeing animals and some aspects of their habitats through books, films and television. This unit gives them a chance to develop a wider perspective and mental map of the geography of the continent, countries and landscapes that the animals live in. What's important is that they start to see why these creatures live there. This will lead on to work in KS2 geography on biomes, and KS2 science on interconnections within the ecosystems. You will touch on reasons why some creatures might be endangered, but such reasons can be complex. Starting with what children know about a particular animal's habitat, daily life, habits and characteristics we can then (in a spiral fashion) begin to look at issues facing landscapes, countries and continents that animals live in. We also need to consider those creatures that they share homes with, and how humans can set aside areas to protect a species. While it is not a feature of this unit, any work on locally endangered animals, habitats and wildlife might help enhance this unit.

Cross-curricular links

- **Maths:** gain a sense of scale and distance (Weeks 1–6).
- **Science:** world habitats and ecosystems (Weeks 1–6).
- **Art & Design:** the mountain, forest, jungle or polar landscapes could lead on to looking at artists who have depicted these landscapes (Weeks 1–6).
- **Music, Dance and Drama:** works of art (see above) could lead on to further work related to music, drama and dance. There are many sources online of sound recordings of animals that could stimulate animal-inspired actions or dances (Weeks 1–6).
- **PSCHE/Citizenship:** the children could discuss the following issues:
What does endangered mean?
How can we care for the world and the environment? (Weeks 1–6)

The Big Finish

The class splits into groups to decorate and create a 'place in a box'. This shoe box, or similar, is a representation of the place they have learned about. Outside, the box will feature weather, plant life, and the human and physical landscape of the place. Inside they will create a suitable habitat for the featured animal, and the possible dangers it faces. If children are more confident they could put their written work inside the box.

Map work

The Rising Stars Geography world map or the Barnaby Bear World map published by the Geographical Association is extremely useful here. Each lesson has a map which shows the sort of environment that the animal might live in; this will allow you to reinforce locational knowledge on a regular basis. It would also be good to have on the wall, or in the Independent Learning Area, the simplified world map split into the continents, on which you could add the key vocabulary as you go along.

Fieldwork

Children might be aware of distant places where the featured creatures live. However this does not often lead to significant locational knowledge. So this will need to be explicitly taught. A local zoo or local museum may give the children a sense of these distant places and the landscapes the creatures live in. It is also good to give a sense of the vast scale and distance that many of these animals travel in and that they don't have a home in the sense of one fixed place.

Independent learning area

A display of children's books would be useful to support learning here. These could develop children's interests in shared or individual reading time. Use a Schools Library Service (or visit a library) to see a range of books on the topics as well as using your in-school resources of books.

Having soft toy animals will help support children role-play, and poster displays showing the range of environments (mountain, jungle, polar, desert) will help transport children's imaginations.

Those who can write more confidently might start to build up fact files of the dangers different animals face, and you could have sticky note displays where they could add things that they have found out.

Assessment

All children can:

- recognise and name some of the continent names: Asia, Oceania, Europe, Antarctica, Africa, North America, South America
- understand that some of these continents have significant hot and/or cold areas
- describe specific human and physical features in these landscapes
- use specific place knowledge to describe the habitat of a significant animal.

Most children can:

- name and locate the continents: Asia, Oceania, Europe, Antarctica, Africa, North America, South America
- describe which of these continents have significant hot and/or cold areas
- describe specific human and physical landmarks of some of these continents
- use specific place knowledge to describe and explain the habitat of a significant animal.

Some children can:

- describe and locate the continents: Asia, Oceania, Europe, Antarctica, Africa, North America, South America
- describe which of these continents have significant hot and/or cold areas
- describe specific human and physical landscapes for these continents
- use specific place knowledge to understand the threats facing the habitats of a significant animal.