



## ENDANGERED SPECIES POSTER: TEACHER HANDOUT

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### Fast Facts

- » The Earth is experiencing its sixth mass extinction of animals and plants. The last major extinction event happened 65 million years ago—causing the disappearance of the dinosaurs.
  - » 1 million species are at risk of extinction in the upcoming decades, including 27% of the world's mammals, 41% of amphibians, 37% of sharks and rays, and 21% of reptiles.
  - » Although gradual extinction of a small number of individual species is a natural occurrence, the accelerated mass extinction the planet is now experiencing has been triggered by human activity, including habitat destruction, overexploitation for the wildlife trade, and pollution.
  - » Humans are also responsible for dramatic changes in the Earth's climate—disrupting global weather patterns and producing an overall increase in the average temperature of the Earth's surface.
- This has contributed to extinctions and caused many species to become endangered, as habitat is lost or altered too quickly for species to adapt.
- » Each species plays a valuable and distinct role in the ecosystem in which it lives. We are directly dependent on the contributions of some species. One-third of the food we eat is pollinated by bird, bat, and insect species—many of which are endangered. We must do all that we can to conserve species and protect their habitats.
  - » In the United States, threatened and endangered species are protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Many species—such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, gray whale, and grizzly bear—have higher population numbers and are on the road to recovery because of ESA protections. Without the ESA, a number of species hovering on the brink of extinction would be gone forever.

### Ways to Take Action

*Everyday actions can make a difference for endangered species. Here are ways that you can help:*

- » Your voice matters! Urge elected officials and others in government to protect endangered animals. Sign up for AWI action alerts, which keep you informed about urgent issues and provide quick and easy ways to get in touch with decision-makers.
  - » Learn about endangered species in your area. Teach your friends and family about the extraordinary wildlife and other animals that live near you. Visit and support national wildlife refuges, parks, and other open spaces where these animals live.
  - » Participate in or hold your own local trash clean-up to help protect the environment and the habitat of endangered species.
  - » Save energy. Turning off the lights when you leave a room means you use less electricity. Many power plants rely on coal and other fossil fuels that damage animal habitat when they are extracted and pollute the environment and contribute to climate change when they are burned.
- » Reduce, reuse, and recycle! Landfills take up valuable space on Earth, and some waste, like plastic bags and bottles, can end up in wildlands and in the oceans, with terrible consequences for animals. If your school has a recycling program be sure to follow the labels on the bins so that as much reusable material as possible makes it to a recycling facility. If your school does not have one, consider how you could help to raise awareness and team up with other students to start a program at your school.
  - » Talk to your family about planting native flowers, trees, and bushes in your yard. This gives local wild animals a place to shelter, eat, and raise young. Do not use pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, or chemical fertilizers, which can poison wildlife. If you live in the city, you can create a container garden or use hanging baskets or window boxes to provide a friendly place for pollinators.
  - » If you see animals at the park, on a nature trail, or near a water source, keep a safe distance away, do not approach them, and do not remove them from their environment. These animals need to stay in their habitat to survive. Take a picture instead.

