

Save a Tree. Save Me!

PROBOSCIS MONKEY

These unusual-looking monkeys are only found along fresh waterways in the mangrove forests and lowland rainforests of Borneo. They live in groups consisting of one male and several females with their young. During the day, they forage for food, with a rest during the midday heat, and in the evening they sleep in the trees along the water's edge. Their diet consists of huge quantities of leaves, together with seeds and occasionally fruit.

The island of Borneo is home to a diverse range of wildlife—many of its native primates and other mammals are found nowhere else in the wild. Due to continuing destruction and clearing of Borneo's rainforests for palm oil plantations (one of Malaysia's top exports) and the harvesting of tropical hardwoods, these rich ecosystems and habitats are in danger. Proboscis monkey numbers have dramatically declined over the past 40 years due to habitat loss, and they are now classified as endangered.

Keeping proboscis monkeys in zoos has proved to be problematic and generally unsuccessful, mainly due to the monkey's specialised diet, so to prevent them from becoming extinct it is imperative that their natural environment be protected. Areas within Borneo have been designated as protected, and wildlife sanctuaries have been established, but more needs to be done to ensure the survival of this distinctive monkey.

Borneo Wildlife

Proboscis monkeys can be found in the wild only on the island of Borneo, along with many other primates and mammals. Divide students into small groups and ask each group to research an animal that is found in Borneo and is affected by rainforest destruction. As a class you could create a visual display featuring a map of Borneo with images and facts added. Some images of rainforest destruction are available on the Teacher Toolkit (www.scholastic.com.au/toolkit).

Launching an Inquiry into Endangered Animals

From the Teacher Toolkit, download images of animals that are safe, threatened, endangered and extinct. Ask each student to think about the words 'safe', 'threatened', 'endangered' and 'extinct'. Write them on the board in random order. Ask students to create a continuum using the words. Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with a set of the animal images, construction paper and glue. Ask them to write the four words vertically and evenly spaced on the paper, then have them paste each animal picture next to its correct category. Once this is complete, students should choose one animal from each category and write a few sentences explaining why they placed that animal in that category.

Display each group's work around the classroom and invite students to do a 'gallery walk' and to observe those that had the same ideas that they did and ones that were different. Ask them to write down any questions they have. Ask each group of students to stand next to their poster, one group at a time, and to share with the class one of their animals and the reason they put it in the category they did. Invite the rest of the class to ask questions.

Learning the Causes of Extinction

There are five major causes of extinction: habitat loss; introduced species; pollution; population growth; and overconsumption. The following activity will allow students to create a list of reasons why animals become extinct. Download the Extinction Scenario Cards from the Teacher Toolkit. Write the objective of the lesson on the board: 'We will sort various scenarios into categories to discover the main reasons animals become extinct.' Have small groups of students sort the scenarios into like categories. Guide students with questions such as 'What do the scenarios have in common?' or 'Are any scenarios similar?' Ask students to label each category by completing the sentence, 'These animals all became extinct because ...' As a class, ask students to explain why they sorted the scenarios into the categories that they did. List the group's sentences on the board and ask the class if any of the sentences could be combined. Guide them to combine the sentences to match the five major causes listed above. These can easily be remembered by using the acronym HIPPO. As an extension, students could create their own scenarios to fit into the categories.

Terrarium

Many common house plants are descendants of the plants found in rainforests—two-thirds of the flowering plants in the world come from rainforests. Have students make their own terrariums. This is a great way to observe the transpiration process—imagine how much water the huge trees found in rainforests could transpire! Instructions on how to make and care for a simple terrarium can be downloaded from the Teacher Toolkit.

