

# Reviews

## *Green Teacher*

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### *Threatened and Endangered Animals*

(Grade 7 and above)

Student edition by Harold Hungerford, David Hagengruber and William J. Bluhm, 1999; Teacher edition by Trudi L. Volk, William J. Bluhm and David Hagengruber, 1999; Stipes Publishing Co. LLC, P0 Box 526, Champaign, IL 61824-0526, (217) 356-8391, fax (217) 356-5753, Teacher edition ISBN 0-87563-874-0, cerlox bound, 190 pp., US \$24.80 (includes Student edition); Student edition, 134 pp., \$13.80.

As a former cat owner, I was amused and proud, rather than disgusted, at seeing the limp, furry (and often dismembered) offerings left on the backdoor mat by our intrepid felines. It was one way that I became familiar with the rodents that shared the rural community my family and I call home. I was less happy with feathered offerings, since many of these were not the ubiquitous and quarrelsome starlings or weaver finches that crowded in and ate all the bird food we put out, but youthful and partially fledged wrens or cardinals whose parents trustingly built nests in the hedge or even under the eaves of our carport. Their young were not sufficiently wise in the ways of local predators to avoid the cunning cats, and there was no second lesson. It never occurred to me that my well-fed pets might be putting the population of a prey species at risk.

*Threatened and Endangered Animals* helps students and teachers take a closer look at the meaning of the terms threatened

and endangered by using examples with which many of us are familiar — uncomfortably and guiltily so, in the case of predation by our own household pets — and provides a structure for issue investigation that can be used to initiate, investigate and recommend appropriate action for diverse environmental issues.

The opening example of the decline of the American bison, a species that was hunted almost to extinction in a few decades in the late 1800s, sets the stage for the student and teacher to realize the impact of the increasing human population on habitat and species. This chapter defines basic terms, lists reasons for animals becoming threatened and endangered, and offers reasons for protecting wildlife and wildlife habitat. An excellent pictorial description of the loss of a wetlands ecosystem due to development is included in this chapter, as well as a brief explanation of loss of species due to legal and illegal trade in animals.

As students begin their investigations, the information in Chapter Two is invaluable. Lists of threatened and endangered species and maps showing their current range make it easy to bookmark a specific state's troubled turtles, as well as other reptiles, birds, insects, crustaceans, mammals or mollusks that are threatened or endangered. So that students and teachers have several starting points, an agency connected with wildlife is listed for each state, some journal and periodical articles covering related topics are given, and a number of key Internet websites are suggested. Finally, a thumbnail sketch of seven animals that are

endangered in the U.S. sparks inquiring students to strike out on their own investigations.

The last half of the text, comprising three chapters dealing with issue awareness, issue investigation, and citizenship action, broadens the view of the teacher and students to an awareness of the universal application of this approach to any environmental issue — in fact, to any issue at all. Not only are the tools explained, but ample opportunity is given for practicing the "dissection" of an issue into its basic components: the event, the problem, the issue, the players, and their positions. A closer look brings to light the values and beliefs that make the players "tick," and a very thorough list of values and their descriptions is included, as well as a practice application of matching values to environmental statements. (All answers and possible answers for the student activities are given in the teacher's section of the guide.) Objectives for the investigation of an environmental issue involve writing a research question, using a survey instrument, developing a data collection plan, interpreting the findings, and recommending appropriate citizen action based on the findings. It was heartening to read the section "Modes of Citizenship Action." Too often students (and their parents and teachers) think of citizen action in terms of reaction. These authors believe that "it is every person's responsibility as a citizen to participate in issue resolution," and the guide promotes logical, effective (and legal) action stemming from a thorough investigation of the issue at hand.

In places, uneven editing mars the excellent content of this resource, and it would have been helpful to have had a glossary of basic terminology and a reference section. The guide is intended for use within the United States, as is made clear by its subtitle, "*An Extended Case Study for the Investigation and Evaluation of Issues Surrounding Threatened and Endangered Animals of the United States.*" However, the issue investigation approach and the case studies are applicable anywhere, and teachers outside of the U.S. could adapt this curriculum by supplementing the guide with species lists and range maps for their own regions.

As a resident of a state that ranks fifth highest in number of endangered and threatened species, I was reminded anew of the effect of human population on wildlife. Like many people, I own pets, drive a car, shop at malls — I'm part of the system, and increasingly the system is a problem that other species face. *Threatened and Endangered Animals* urges teachers and students to honestly, carefully, and as dispassionately as possible explore how our actions threaten other species and to find solutions that benefit all. If we can do this, and teach others how to do it, we will have come a long way towards halting the loss of species, which ultimately impoverishes our own.

Karen L. Hargrove  
Center - Environmental Education  
Middle Tennessee State  
University  
Murfreesboro TN