

The Jeff Corwin Experience

Australia: Grand Island Ecosystem

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: K-8

Curriculum Focus: Life Science

Lesson Duration: Three class periods

Program Description

Jeff Corwin visits Australia's unique creatures; animals found nowhere else on Earth. And he tries to find the endangered species that are now fighting to make a comeback after being displaced by human settlers.

Video Index

Segment 1: New South Wales (19 min.)

Description

Begin exploring Australia in New South Wales, where you'll meet dingoes and the death adder, a poisonous snake. Then travel to Bellingen Island to see the giant bats.

Pre-viewing question

Why is conservation an important issue in Australia?

Answer: Answers will vary, but some students may say that people realize the value of the unique species and they are actively trying to protect them.

Post-viewing question

How do the social relationships among dingoes help them survive?

Answer: Dingoes travel in packs, which is safer than traveling alone. The packs have a social hierarchy with an alpha male and an alpha female at the top. One animal is chosen to overeat so it can return to the den and regurgitate food for the young.

Segment 2: Scotia Sanctuary and Beyond (11 min.)

Description

Enter Scotia Sanctuary to meet some unusual animals: the blue-tongued skink, the bridle nailtail wallaby, and the bettong, the largest member of the rat kangaroo family.

Pre-viewing question

Where do you think the bridle nailtail wallaby gets its name?

Answer: Answers will vary, but some students may say that markings on its body resemble a bridle.

Post-viewing question

How did the Eastern brown snake end up in a kitchen?

Answer: Humans are moving into the animal's natural habitat.

Segment 3: Kangaroo Island (11 min.)

Description

Catch up with the koala, a formerly endangered species; dive underwater in search of sea dragons; then dig up a nest of male and female goannas, lizards unique to Australia.

Pre-viewing question

How do you think people saved koalas from extinction?

Answer: Answers will vary, but some students may know that a small population was brought to an isolated place and carefully protected while their numbers grew. About 30,000 koalas live in Australia now.

Post-viewing question

What is unique about the goanna?

Answer: This lizard digs a burrow to use for mating.

Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Learn about the animals of Australia.
- Write questions for a class quiz game.
- Play the game using the questions that students wrote.

Materials

- *The Jeff Corwin Experience: Australia: Grand Island Ecosystem* video and VCR, DVD and DVD player
- Computer(s) with Internet access
- Index cards or small pieces of paper
- Pens or pencils

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by showing students *The Jeff Corwin Experience: Australia: Grand Island Ecosystem*. (If time is limited, you can show one or two segments; however, it would be best if students could watch all three segments.)



2. After watching the video, tell students that as a way to see how much they learned, the class is going to create a game show with questions and answers based on the video. Pass out the index cards or paper and ask each student to write three to five questions and answers, putting each question on one side of the card and the answer on the other.
3. If students need help getting started, you may suggest the following questions:
 - Where is Australia located?
 - What are dingoes?
 - What common animal do dingoes resemble?
 - Where do fruit-eating bats live?
 - Name one unique behavior of fruit-eating bats.
 - What is unique about the skink that Jeff Corwin saw in Australia?
 - What kind of lizard is unique to Australia?
 - What are the mating habits of this lizard?
 - What animals are koalas related to?
4. Give students time in class to work on their questions. Then collect them and divide the class into two teams. You can pick a student to act as the “host”, or do the job yourself.
5. Play a couple of rounds of the game. You can use the questions and ask students to come up with the answers, or give them the answer and ask them to respond with an appropriate question. For example, if the answer is, “They resemble dogs,” an appropriate question would be, “What common animal do dingoes resemble?”
6. Conclude the lesson by asking students what they learned about the animals of Australia. Do students think that the animals are unique? Which animal did they find the most interesting?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students’ work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students were highly attentive during the video; wrote interesting questions for the game; and were highly engaged in the game.
- **2 points:** Students were mostly attentive during the video; wrote satisfactory questions for the game; and participated in the game.
- **1 point:** Students were not attentive during the video; did not complete questions for the game; and participated minimally in the game.

Vocabulary

Australia

Definition: An island continent located between the South Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean

Context: Australia is the only continent that is also a country.



dingo

Definition: A wild dog of Australia

Context: Dingoes often live in family groups headed by an alpha male and an alpha female.

goanna

Definition: A lizard in the monitor family that is found only in Australia

Context: The male and female goanna lizards dig a burrow and mate for 12 days, after which the female remains inactive for about three weeks before depositing the eggs into the burrow.

grey-headed flying fox

Definition: A species of large fruit-eating bats found in Australia

Context: The grey-headed flying fox can have a wingspan of more than three feet.

koala

Definition: A Australian mammal in the marsupial family that spends its life in the trees

Context: Many people think the koala is a bear, but it is actually in the same family as the kangaroo.

Academic Standards

National Academy of Sciences

The National Academy of Sciences provides guidelines for teaching science in grades K–12 to promote scientific literacy. To view the standards, visit this Web site:

<http://books.nap.edu/html/nses/html/overview.html#content>.

Grades K-4

- Life Science: Organisms and environments

Grades 5-8

- Life Science: Populations and ecosystems, Diversity and adaptations of organisms

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Writing: Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

