The Jeff Corwin Experience
Tasmania: Island Ecosystem
Teacher’s Guide

Grade Level: K–8  Curriculum Focus: Life Science  Lesson Duration: Three class periods

Program Description
Journey from dank limestone caves to the port capital of Hobart to experience the bizarre wildlife paradise of Tasmania. Jeff Corwin encounters egg-laying mammals, an ancient spider, kangaroos, venomous snakes, and the notorious Tasmanian devil.

Video Index

Segment 1: Cradle Mountain National Park (14 min.)
Description
Explore Tasmania, the home of colorful and unique animals. Meet an unusual spider and snake, and learn about quolls and how they are being saved from extinction.

Pre-viewing question
Why do you think animals extinct on mainland Australia still exist in Tasmania?
Answer: Answers will vary, but some students may know that Tasmania is isolated from Australia, so its animals can continue to thrive.

Post-viewing question
Why did quolls almost become extinct on the mainland?
Answer: Foxes, cats, and other animals hunted the quolls.

Segment 2: Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary (16 min.)
Description
Enter Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary, home to wombats, pademelons, and eastern gray kangaroos that communicate by bobbing their heads.

Pre-viewing question
What is a pademelon?
Answer: Most students will not be familiar with this wallaby, a type of marsupial.

Post-viewing question
Why do eastern gray kangaroos bob their heads?
Answer: They communicate; the mother eastern gray kangaroo bobs her head to reassure her young, called a joey.

**Segment 3: Near Hobart** (12 min.)

*Description*
Travel outside Hobart to discover the duck-billed platypus, an egg-laying mammal, and the large Tasmanian tiger snake. Then catch a glimpse of the fierce Tasmanian devils.

*Pre-viewing question*
How do you think the Tasmanian devil got its name?
Answer: Answers will vary, but some students may figure out that it is a dark, fierce, and frightening animal.

*Post-viewing question*
What is the function of the spurs on the duck-billed platypus?
Answer: The spurs secrete venom, which is strong enough to kill small animals and cause pain in people.

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**Lesson Plan**

**Student Objectives**
- Learn where Tasmania is located in relation to Australia.
- Research the unique animals in Tasmania.
- Develop profile pages for selected animals.

**Materials**
- *The Jeff Corwin Experience: Tasmania: Island Ecosystem* video and VCR, DVD and DVD player
- Computer(s) with Internet access
- Map showing Tasmania (from an online or print source)
- Paper and pencils
- Colored pencils and markers

**Procedures**

1. Begin the lesson by showing students where Tasmania is located in relation to Australia on a map. You can find one at [http://www.enchantedlearning.com/school/Australia/Ausmap.shtml](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/school/Australia/Ausmap.shtml). Point out that Tasmania is an island in the Tasman Sea, south of the mainland of Australia.
2. Discuss what often happens on islands: Because they are isolated, wildlife develops that is not found anywhere else in the world. Tasmania is no exception. Tell students that Tasmania’s wildlife is unique and unlike anything they have ever seen.

3. Show students The Jeff Corwin Experience: Tasmania: Island Ecosystem. (If time is limited, you can show parts of the video; however interesting animals appear in all three segments.)

4. After watching the video, divide the class into five groups. Tell students each group will develop a profile page of two animals in the video. Each profile page should include the following:
   - The name of the animal
   - Picture of the animal
   - Where it lives on the island
   - Its habits (what it eats, when it hunts, when it reproduces)
   - Social structure (solitary or lives in a group)
   - Status (threatened, endangered, or not)

5. Students have many animals to choose. Share the following suggestions with students if necessary. Don’t worry about duplications; students should research animals they are interested in learning more about.
   - Tasmanian spider
   - lowland copperhead snake
   - quoll
   - wombat
   - Tasmanian pademelon
   - eastern gray kangaroo
   - echidna
   - duck-billed platypus
   - Tasmanian tiger snake
   - Tasmanian devil

6. Give students time in class to work on their profile pages, and encourage them to make the pages as attractive as possible. For additional information, suggest the following Web sites:
   - http://www.tourtasmania.com/content.php?id=echidna

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7. Conclude the lesson by having students share their profile pages. Then ask students which animal made the biggest impression on them. Make sure they can support their ideas with examples.

**Assessment**

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

- **3 points**: Students were highly attentive when watching the video; researched their animals thoroughly and carefully; created accurate, informative, and attractive profile pages.
- **2 points**: Students were attentive when watching the video; researched their animals adequately; created satisfactory profile pages.
- **1 point**: Students were not attentive when watching the video; did not research their animals thoroughly; did not complete their profile pages.

**Vocabulary**

**echidna**
*Definition*: One of only three species of egg-laying mammals
*Context*: The echidna has soft quills all over its body.

**eastern gray kangaroo**
*Definition*: A kind of marsupial known as a macropod, which means big feet; these animals can move around very efficiently.
*Context*: The mother eastern gray kangaroo reassures her young by bobbing her head.

**pademelon**
*Definition*: The third smallest kind of kangaroo in Tasmania
*Context*: The pademelon stands about 40 centimeters (16 inches) tall.

**quoll**
*Definition*: A mammal about the size of a cat, either light brown or black, with white spots on its body
*Context*: The quoll is extinct in Australia, but it can still be found in Tasmania.
Tasmanian devil

*Definition:* An animal in the marsupial family that is a carnivore, makes loud noises, and is considered to be a dangerous predator

*Context:* Some people think that the Tasmanian devil does not deserve its reputation as a fierce and bloodthirsty animal; it is simply trying to survive in the wild.

Tasmanian tiger snake

*Definition:* The longest and largest snake in Tasmania

*Context:* Besides being large, the Tasmanian tiger snake is highly venomous and it secretes a potent toxin.

wombat

*Definition:* The largest burrowing mammal, also in the marsupial family

*Context:* The wombat’s short legs and long paws are perfect for digging and pushing the dirt aside.

**Academic Standards**

**National Academy of Sciences**


- 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](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