

The Jeff Corwin Experience

Wolves

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: K-8

Curriculum Focus: Life Science

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Program Description

A few hundred years ago, wolf species were plentiful throughout North America. What factors are responsible for the decline of these carnivorous mammals that are part of the dog family? Explore the survival skills, life cycles, and habitats of North American wolves.

Video Index

Segment 1: Wolves and Other Animals (7 min.)

Description

Meet two wolves about to be transported to a cleaner, more spacious sanctuary in Colorado. Explore the surrounding woods and check out the venomous copperhead snake.

Pre-viewing question

Why do you think wolves must be conserved?

Answer: Answers may include that wolves have been hunted nearly to extinction.

Post-viewing question

What are two ways a copperhead snake protects itself from predators?

Answer: A copperhead produces venom, which may result in a poisonous bite, and its coloring helps it blend into the environment.

Segment 2: Moving the Wolves (3 min.)

Description

Watch the preparations for the wolves' journey: They receive inoculations against rabies and distemper and get moved into traveling crates.

Pre-viewing question

Why do you think the wolves being moved receive inoculations?

Answer: The inoculations will protect the wolves against diseases because they will be living near humans and domesticated animals for the first time.

Post-viewing question

Why are the wolves traveling so far away to a new home?

Answer: The conservation organization sponsoring their move has found a ranch in Colorado with enough room for both of them.

Segment 3: Wolves Up Close (12 min.)

Description

Learn the social habits of wolves. Observe the clan's alpha male, and find out why captive breeding is necessary for the Mexican gray wolf.

Pre-viewing question

Why do you think scientists want the Mexican gray wolves to breed in captivity?

Answer: The species is close to extinction, and breeding them in captivity increases the chances of producing young.

Post-viewing question

How do wolves interact with each other?

Answer: Wolves live in a group called a clan. The leader is the alpha male, who leads the animals in hunts. Wolves communicate by howling and using their keen sense of smell.

Segment 4: Freeing the Wolves (7 min.)

Description

Observe the leaders of the conservation group freeing the two wolves. See how conservation programs help animal species in trouble.

Pre-viewing question

How do you think the wolves will respond to freedom?

Answer: Students may say that the wolves will enjoy their freedom.

Post-viewing question

What did you observe as the wolves left their crates and were free to go?

Answer: Answers will vary.

Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Discover the social structure of North American wolves.
- Learn about problems and solutions regarding the status of this wolf species.



- Create a poster illustrating the wolf's social structure, as well as problems and solutions associated with the survival of their species.

Materials

- *The Jeff Corwin Experience: Wolves* video
- Computer(s) with Internet access
- Poster board
- Markers and colored pencils

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by having students watch *The Jeff Corwin Experience: Wolves*. Tell them the program explains that the North American wolf species has been hunted nearly to extinction and that conservationists are working to solve that problem. The program also illustrates wolf social structure.
2. After watching the program, make sure students understand the following key concepts:
 - Humans have hunted the species close to extinction.
 - Humans are raising wolves in captivity, which presents many challenges because wolves require a lot of space in the wild.
 - Ranchers continue to worry about wolves killing their livestock. They are considering new strategies and precautions to preserve their livestock.
 - Wolves live in clans led by the alpha male. They hunt, play, and spend their lives together.
3. Divide students into pairs and tell them that their task is to create a poster illustrating what they have learned about wolves. It should include a section about the problems facing wolves, the solutions, and their social structure. Encourage students to be creative in displaying the information.
4. Give students time in class to work on their posters, or they may complete them as homework if necessary.
5. During the next class period, ask volunteers to share their posters. Then review the main ideas. Help students understand that people must make sure that wolves have large enough areas to roam so that they can live in their natural social groups.



Assessment

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

3 points: Students watched the video segments carefully and attentively; worked well with their partners to address all issues; and produced an, accurate, creative, and attractive posters.

2 points: Students were attentive to the video segments; worked with their partners to think about most of the issues; and produced a somewhat accurate, creative, and attractive posters.

1 point: Students were not attentive to the video segments; did not work well with their partners to think about the issues; and produced incomplete posters.

Vocabulary

alpha male

Definition: The largest and most powerful male in a wolf clan

Context: Leading its clan in a hunt for food, the alpha male is the first wolf to eat after a kill.

clan

Definition: The social group of wolves, the members of which hunt, eat, play, and live together

Context: The members of a wolf clan depend on each other to survive.

conservation

Definition: The planned management and protection of something, such as a place, plant, or animal

Context: Members of a conservation group are working to make sure the North American wolf species thrives.

natural habitat

Definition: A section of the ecosystem that an animal needs to thrive

Context: As humans encroach on the wolf's natural habitat, the animal has less territory to find food.

North American wolf

Definition: A mammal that is the largest member of the dog family

Context: The North American wolf can run great distances and capture prey with its powerful jaws.



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>.

This lesson plan addresses the following science standards:

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>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Life Science – Understands the relationships among organisms in their physical environment
 - Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Writing: Gathers and uses information for research purposes
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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>

