



Learning Activity:

HEART ANIMALS

Activity Type	Arts and Crafts
Focus Area	Arts Education
Duration	30–40 minutes

Overview

In this craft activity, students will show their love for wildlife by creating unique heart animals resembling a panda, a lion, or an African wild dog. While artistically expressing their appreciation and concern for animals, students will also learn the meaning behind risk assessments for species and what it means for a species to be endangered.

Learning Objective

At the completion of the activity, students should be able to:

- Understand what it means for a wildlife species to be endangered and identify the different categories of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.
- Understand the connection between human actions and species loss.

Materials Needed:

- Construction paper (different colors)
- Glue
- Scissors
- Markers



Giant panda with one-month-old baby



● Vocabulary

- Terms describing an animal's conservation status (listed from lowest to highest threat):
 - **Not Evaluated:** a species that has not yet been assessed
 - **Data Deficient:** a species that cannot be evaluated because of insufficient information
 - **Least Concern:** a species evaluated to have a low risk of extinction
 - **Near Threatened:** a species that is close to meeting the threatened classification or that would be threatened if not for conservation efforts
 - **Vulnerable:** a species considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild
 - **Endangered:** a species considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild
 - **Critically Endangered:** a species facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild
 - **Extinct in the Wild:** a species known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity, or as a naturalized population well outside the historical range
 - **Extinct:** a species for which there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual of that species has died
- **Habitat loss:** the disappearance of natural environments (required for plants' and animals' survival) due to harvesting for human consumption and/or clearing to make way for agriculture, housing, roads, pipelines, and other forms of human development
- **Species:** a group or type of similar, living organisms that can repopulate








A male lion gazes across the land at sunrise in the Maasai Mara, Kenya.



● Activity Procedure

Part 1: Introduction and Preparation

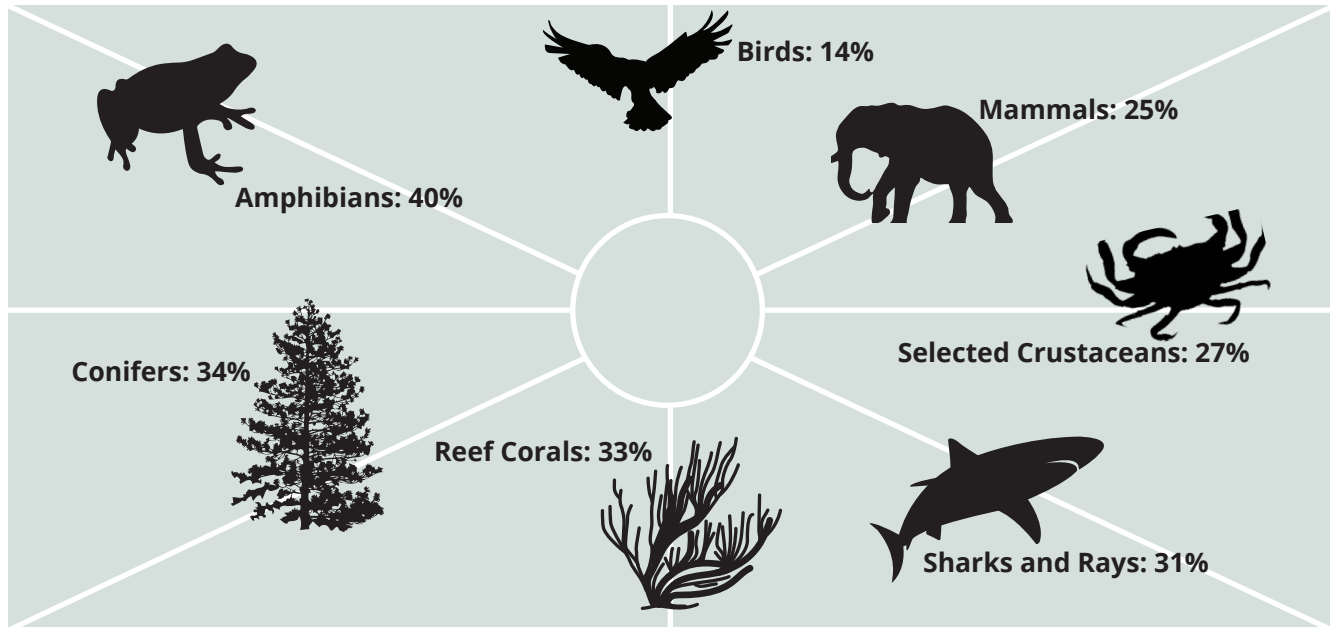
- So that students understand the concept of endangered species, have them explain what a species is and why we measure species health.
 - A species can be an animal, a tree, a coral, a fungus, an insect, a human, or another type of the numerous other life forms on this planet.
 - According to the IUCN, humans know about an estimated 1,562,663 different life forms on Earth. These include:

 5,416 mammals	 950,000 insects
 16,000 mushrooms or fungi	 287,655 plants
 29,300 fish	

- Each species has its own unique characteristics, including overall health and life expectancy. Studying how healthy a species is helps us understand which species need our help and how we can protect them. Defining a species' survival risk is where the term "endangered" comes into play.
- Ask the students to define what it means for an animal species to be endangered.
 - An endangered species is an animal or a plant species that is in danger of extinction (i.e., being wiped out of existence).
 - To help keep track of the health of a species and how endangered it is, species are placed into categories, based on the species' population, health of habitat, range, use or trade, conservation efforts, and threats.
 - Scientists estimate that around 2,000 species become extinct per year.
- Continue the discussion by talking about the IUCN Red List and explaining how experts keep track of the conservation status of various species.
 - The IUCN Red List is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plants and animals. The Red List indicates whether a given species still exists and the likelihood of that species becoming extinct in the future.
 - Every five years, the IUCN evaluates the population status and threats of a myriad of species. Using this information, species are placed in categories based on their conservation status. These categories and their definitions are listed in the Vocabulary section of this activity.



- To date, more than 128,500 species have been assessed by the Red List, and more than 35,500 of those are threatened with extinction. Here is how the list breaks down:



- Finish the discussion by asking students what might cause an animal species to be at risk of extinction.
 - One of the main reasons wildlife becomes endangered is habitat loss. The world's forests, swamps, plains, lakes, and other habitats continue to disappear as they are cleared to make way for agriculture, housing, roads, pipelines, and other human developments.
 - Climate change is also putting wildlife species at risk for becoming endangered. Sea levels are rising, and oceans are becoming warmer. Longer, more intense droughts threaten crops, wildlife, and freshwater supplies. Effects from climate change affect a variety of species from all over the world. Climate change also causes weather events such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and storms to become more erratic and intense.
 - Poaching and the illegal wildlife trade put wildlife species at risk. Wild plants and animals from tens of thousands of species are caught or harvested from the wild and then sold legitimately as food, pets, ornamental plants, leather, tourist ornaments, and medicine. Wildlife trade escalates into a crisis when an increasing proportion of it is illegal and unsustainable—directly threatening the survival of many species in the wild.
 - Human-wildlife conflict leads to wildlife species becoming endangered. As human populations expand and natural habitats shrink, people and animals are increasingly coming into conflict over living space and food. People lose their crops, livestock, property, and sometimes their lives. The animals, many of which are already threatened or endangered, are often killed in retaliation or to prevent future conflicts.



Part 2: Activity

Have the students do the following for the animal of their choice:

Panda:

1. Cut out a large heart in any color. This will be the base for the panda.
2. Cut out four medium-sized hearts in a different color. These will be used for the panda's ears and eye patches.
3. Glue two of the medium-sized hearts behind the top of the base heart. Make sure that the tops of the medium-sized hearts are poking out, to resemble the panda's ears.
4. Glue the remaining two medium-sized hearts resembling the eye patches on the center of the base heart.
5. Cut out a small heart of a different color for the panda's nose. Glue this on the base heart where the nose would go.
6. Decorate the rest of the panda using markers, crayons, or colored pencils, giving the animal eyes in the eye patches and a mouth. Add any other desired elements.



Lion:

1. Cut out a large heart in any color. This will be the base for the lion.
2. Cut ridges into the edges of the base heart to create a pattern resembling a lion's mane.
3. Cut a medium-sized heart in a different color. Glue it upside down on the center of the base heart.
4. Cut out a small heart in a different color for the lion's nose. Glue this on the medium-sized heart where the nose would go.
7. Decorate the lion using markers, crayons, or colored pencils, making sure to give the animal eyes. Add any other desired elements.



African Wild Dog:

1. Cut out a large heart in any color. This will be the base for the wild dog.
2. Cut out four medium-sized hearts—two in the same color as the head, for ears, and two in a different color for eye markings.
3. Glue two of the medium hearts behind the top of the base heart to resemble the ears. Make sure that the points of the medium hearts are upside down so that the ears appear pointy.
4. Glue the other two medium hearts where the eyes should be.
5. Cut out five smaller hearts in different colors. Glue two of the hearts inside of the ears, two hearts inside the eyes, and one heart for the nose.
6. Decorate the rest of the wild dog using markers, crayons, or colored pencils, giving the animal eyes and a mouth. Add any other desired elements.





Part 3: Discussion and Assessment

- After the students finish creating their heart animals, remind them that, although there are threats facing wildlife, we can all work together to protect endangered species. Have the students brainstorm with their classmates the different ways they can help endangered animals. Ideas can include the following:
 - Lower energy use by turning off lights and other electronic devices when they are not being used.
 - Be mindful to not waste food.
 - Talk or write to local community leaders so that they make decisions to help protect nature.
 - Be mindful of water use when brushing teeth or taking a shower or bath.
 - Talk to friends and family about protecting the Earth.

Extended Learning Options

- Assign a research project on an endangered animal using the [WWF Species Directory](#), which lists a species' conservation status. Ensure that the students explore the different threats facing their animals, what WWF is doing to protect them, and what we can do to help them.
- Use a tablet or smartphone (if available) to download the [WWF Together app](#). Encourage students to explore the other animal species segments.
- Start a class fundraiser to protect endangered species and their habitats using WWF's online fundraising tool, Panda Nation. Learn more at [pandanation.org](#).

Additional Background Information

- **Article:** WWF's [Species page](#)
- **Video:** [What is an Endangered Species?](#)
- **Article:** [Habitat Loss](#)
- **Article:** [Wildlife Conservation](#)
- **Report:** [Living Planet Report 2020: Youth Edition](#)
- **Article:** [What does 'endangered species' mean?](#)

For more fun classroom activities with a focus on wild species and conservation, visit [wildclassroom.org](#).