

Penguin Mission

An interactive, outdoor eco-adventure

These teachers' notes are to be used with Project Pull-out #47, which is found in issue 100 of DMAG. Students will learn about little penguins, ecosystems, the environment and the threats facing the little penguin.

This supplement encourages students to:

- Investigate an animal in depth
- Understand that the animal is uniquely adapted to its environment
- Appreciate that if the habitat the animal lives in disappears, so does the animal
- Investigate the threats facing the animal
- Explore ways in which the threats can be minimised
- Discuss how the threats the penguins face are similar to threats faced by other animals
- Monitor the media for news of similar environmental issues that are threatening other species around the world
- Discuss how the media can be used to help save animals
- Formulate interview questions for a mock media story

Science: Our Australia and Environment Matters

As a class, look at the pictures shown in DMAG on pages 46 and 47 of the little penguins. Discuss the questions raised with each picture. What can the students learn about little penguins just by looking at pictures of them?

Ask the class to break into pairs and come up with five interesting facts about little penguins. Write the facts on the board to pool the collective knowledge.

Science: A change for the better

As a class, discuss how the little penguin is suited to its environment. Ask students to complete the exercise "Bird's Eye View" on the Student Activity Sheet. List some characteristics that make the penguin suited to life in the water. What do penguins rely on the sea for? [Their food.] What do they rely on the shoreline for? [Places for burrows]. What would happen if they could no longer go into the sea? Or if the sea became a very dangerous place? Or if the food they found in the sea disappeared?

These little penguins are at Phillip Island. To have your students take part in a Penguin Mission on the island, call 03 5951 2823 or email marketing@penguins.org.au



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What would happen if they could no longer make their burrows on the land? Where would they lay their eggs? What affect would this have on the population?

Extension exercise

If you're able to go on a class excursion to Phillip Island Nature Parks, or a zoo to see the penguins, ask each student to draw a little penguin based on real life observation. Students should then caption their pictures with arrows pointing out the penguin's adaptations to the water. If you're not able to see penguins, ask students to go into the playground or local park and draw a bird found in the local area. They will have to be very quiet and still to be able to observe the bird. Ask students to also

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label the parts of the birds on the drawings. Compare the local birds to the penguins. Are different species of birds more adaptable than others? For instance, how do sea gulls compare to penguins? Why are sea gulls more common?

Science & HSIE: Threats

Ask the class to brainstorm some of the threats the little penguins might face. Then read pages 54-55 of *DMAG* to see how many threats they were able to pick. Ask the class how they know that these threats exist. What sort of evidence would there be? Would there be reports of penguins being hit by cars? Would rangers find penguins with fishing line caught around them? Would there be dead penguins? Would their numbers decrease? Ask the students to imagine that they are the head ranger in charge of a penguin colony - what sort of things would they have their rangers do? For instance, count the number of penguins? Weigh them on a regular basis? Record how many burrows there are?

Maths: Graphs

Following on from the above exercise, ask students how they might present some of the above data. For instance, could they draw a graph of penguin numbers each month? Or a graph of penguin weights? Discuss what an axis is, and a trend line. Why are graphs so useful in these instances? Can people quickly see if the population is increasing or decreasing?

Little penguins return to their burrows on Phillip Island, Victoria. See www.penguins.org.au for more information.



English: Media Studies

Discuss stories that have been in the media about environmental disasters or habitat destruction that have affected animals. Ask students to scan their local newspapers for such stories. Find pictures from the recent US oil spill and discuss how the pictures make them feel. Is it important

that the media reports these things? How do people find out things like this happen? What sources of media are there?

Ask students to imagine that there has been an oil spill near Phillip Island. They have to write a story for the local paper and interview a ranger at Phillip Island Nature Parks to find out what they do to treat birds covered in oil. Ask each student to prepare a list of 10 questions they would ask the ranger. They can then try to work out as best they can how the ranger might answer, and have a go at writing a short story for the paper.

Science & HSIE: Environment

Discuss how some of the threats facing the little penguins can be reduced. What is in the rangers' control at Phillip Island? E.g. feral fox control, closing some beaches after sunset, alerting the local community with regards to looking out for penguins and keeping pets indoors. What threats aren't in the rangers' control? E.g. oil spills and overfishing. Would there be an action plan in the event of an oil spill? What can be done about overfishing? Do some of the threats facing penguins apply to other species?

Extension exercise

Investigate foxes in Australia. What signs do rangers look for to tell a fox has been about? What other animals do foxes hunt? When did foxes come to Australia? What happens when foxes are introduced to an island that previously had no predators?

Art

Ask students to design a poster alerting people who live near penguins about the things they can do to help save the little penguins.

PENGUIN MISSION

Phillip Island Nature Parks is now running interactive outdoor penguin missions for groups. Attendees receive training from a dedicated ranger, make a plaster cast of a fox footprint, and discover in detail the threats facing little penguins. This hands-on eco experience will captivate students and bring this teaching unit to life. For details and bookings call 03 5951 2823 or email marketing@penguins.org.au.