

AV Reviews

Rachel Hays
Department Editor

Plants and animals of long ago. 1986. National Geographic, Washington, D.C. 2 sound filmstrips, 28 minutes. Purchase \$61.95.

This is an excellent introductory look at life in prehistoric times. The first filmstrip, *When Dinosaurs Were Alive*, explains what these creatures were, introduces various kinds of dinosaurs, and presents other animals that lived during their age. *After the Dinosaurs*, describes many different kinds of mammals and presents one reason why they may have supplanted their predecessors.

Although targeted for K-4, the concepts and vocabulary may provide better coverage for grades 4-6. The teacher's guide provides some limited background information, hardly enough for someone not familiar with the topic and too little for someone who is. The lack of references to any of a number of excellent books and articles on this topic seems to be one major flaw. This discussion and activities provide a number of good suggestions for follow-up activities. For example, the suggestion that modeling clay be used to demonstrate how fossils may form provides concrete images of an otherwise abstract concept. In all, this program represents a good core around which to form a teaching unit on prehistoric life.

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Vanishing from the earth. 1986. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C. 3 sound filmstrips. 17 min. each. Purchase \$87.95.

One-a-day—only this time it is not a vitamin. It is the world-wide extinction rate! This seems like an alarming rate, but extinction is a natural process. Recent research shows that the rate of extinction has accelerated in this century. This program tries to explain the causes, consequences and prevention of extinction.

In "Causes" of extinction, many examples of organism extinctions, ranging from prehistoric to present, are given. Habitat destruction is today's leading cause—logging, wetland drainage, tropical roads, farming, recreational camping, over-hunting, poaching, exotic pets and plants, and pollution fill out the sequence of causes. Food chain interruption is discussed as a spreading effect of extinction. Organisms that are specialized to their habitats suffer the most in that they cannot adjust to new habitats. Once their habitats are gone, they are gone.

The "Consequences" of extinction presents the ecological principle—*everything is connected to everything else*. When one organism becomes extinct or endangered, its associated food web is affected. The sea otter is making a comeback because laws now restrict hunting. As the otter gains in numbers, the rest of its food web is coming back into balance. Awareness of wildlife usage is developed through a discussion of domestic plants that were bred from wild varieties. Herds of musk oxen are now used to supply wool for weaving. Manatees are being suggested as possible control agents of water hyacinths in appropriate areas. Discovering new uses of plants and animals is a positive consequence of protecting endangered species. It is impossible to know what organisms will be useful in the future; therefore, we need to protect them all.

"Saving" species from extinction is a matter of worldwide public concern and awareness. Protecting endangered species is shown to be a multifaceted problem. Protecting existing habitats and redeveloping habitats is one method of protection. The development of habitat zoos, seed banks, botanical gardens, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas and management techniques are giving endangered species a chance at survival. Captive breeding may give some species their only chance. Laws, public education, and scientific research are all needed to continue with species protection and recovery. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 is an effective law which is now protecting Bengal tigers, butterflies, cacti and pandas.

Survival of wildlife is dependent on human concern and action. This concept is the basic point of this condensed, clear, overview of a complex problem. The series covers aspects from the economics of poaching to world awareness, to politics, to esthetics. A basic understanding and appreciation is accomplished with the program.

The series is acceptable for third grade through adult audiences. It may be used as a general overview or as an introduction to in-depth analysis. The discussion-activities section of the guides offers enough ideas to develop the series into a full teaching unit. This is an excellent series.

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Home free: return of the bald eagle. 1985. The New Film Company, Inc.—Suite 116. Arlington, MA. 16 mm or ¾ in. or ½ in. video. 29 min. Purchase \$450 or \$400, Rental \$50 or \$35.

This dramatic presentation of the reintroduction of our national bird into Massachusetts contains some really stunning photography. After a brief presentation of the history of the loss of the bald eagle from the area by loss of habitat through clearing for farming and use of pesticides, we follow wildlife photographer Jack Swedberg in the pursuit of his dream to return the birds to Massachusetts.

The difficulty of finding birds at just the right age is overcome through international cooperation. Birds captured from treetop nests in Manitoba are relocated to hacking pens at Quabbin Reservoir (the man-made wilderness which protects Boston's watersupply) at just the right age. They needed to be old enough to accept themselves as eagles and young enough to imprint on the new location as home. The transplant is successful as far as the story goes, but it takes five years for the birds to reach breeding age, so we don't learn

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