

BUYER BEWARE

2-3RD GRADE
LANGUAGE ARTS, SCIENCE,
SOCIAL STUDIES

Learning Goals: The student understands the challenges and problems that come with owning an exotic pet. They understand the negative impact that the exotic pet trade can have on wildlife. Lastly, they understand basic pet care requirements, and the importance of research and questions to consider when choosing any pet.

Students will be able to:

- Identify ways in which collection for the pet trade affects wildlife
- Discuss some of the issues associated with the international pet trade

LESSON DESCRIPTION

Malagasy wildlife—such as hissing cockroaches, day geckos, chameleons, tenrecs and tomato frogs—is sold as pets. In this activity students explore the hazards and true costs of exotic pet ownership. What is the price to the owner, the individual animal, the species and the environment? Students will research in teams and present their findings via a PowerPoint, visual display or other type of presentation.

- Describe some reasons why exotic animals do not always make good pets
- Understand why it is important to research before selecting a pet
- Compare and contrast the care requirements for a domesticated pet versus an exotic pet

Materials needed:

- Pet Research Activity Sheet (one per student)
- Access to resource materials for research
- Materials to make display or PowerPoint

1 HOUR

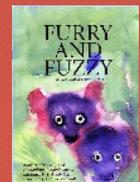
MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR LEMURS

READ AND DISCUSS

1. Introduce the activity by asking students the following questions. How many of you own a pet? List the number and types of pets that students own on the board. From where did your pets come? What type of food, shelter and care does your pet require? Who cares for your pet at home? How many of you have ever wanted to own a wild or exotic pet? Explain that unlike domestic species that have adapted to living with humans over thousands of years, wild animals are not adapted to living with humans. While they have adaptations that help them survive in the wild, they are not well adapted to living with us. Dogs, cats, hamsters, domesticated rats and mice, horses and other livestock are examples

FOR BACKGROUND
INFORMATION SEE:

*MAKING A DIFFERENCE
FOR LEMURS*



FEATURED BOOKS:
FURRY AND FUZZY, TIK-TIK
THE RING-TAILED LEMUR

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of domesticated animals. Snakes, turtles, frogs, hedgehogs, tarantulas, lizards, parrots and monkeys are examples of exotic animals that are also sometimes kept as pets.

2. Instruct students to read the book *Furry and Fuzzy the Red-ruffed Lemur Twins* and/or *Tik-Tik the Ring-tailed Lemur* (or read the stories aloud to the class). Ring-tailed lemurs are the type of lemur most commonly kept. During the story, students should look for information about the lemur's behavior, diet, natural habitat and activities that would help them to determine if a lemur would make a good pet.
3. After the students have completed their reading, discuss their findings. Create two lists. One listing the pros of owning a lemur, the other the cons.
4. Continue the discussion with the following questions: What does endangered mean? An endangered species exists in such small numbers that it is at risk of extinction. How do animals or plants become endangered? Plants and animals can become endangered for a variety of reasons including habitat loss and over-hunting. Collecting species for the pet trade can also cause a species to become endangered. Why might it be wrong to take an animal from the wild? Each species fills an important role or niche within their environment. Taking them from the wild can endanger the species. Many exotic species have care requirements that most people cannot meet. Keeping exotic animals as pets can also be dangerous. Many state, county and city ordinances prohibit the ownership of certain exotic species.

Ask students if an animal taken from the wild would have the best quality of life possible. What could happen if the person buying this animal had little to no knowledge about the care of it? Ask: Just because owning a particular exotic pet is legal, does that

ANALYTICAL WRITING

Think of a pet that a family can own and explain how to take care of it. Now, think of an animal that would not make a good pet. Explain why this animal should be left in the wild.

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mean it is a good choice for everyone? How can you find out if a particular pet requires a permit?

ACTIVITY

1. Below is a list of exotic and domestic species that are sometimes kept as pets. Working in research teams of 2-3 people, students will research their selected species, answer the questions on the Pet Research Activity Sheet and present their findings in a display or PowerPoint presentation.

Domestic Pets	Exotic Animals
Small Dog	Lemur
Large Dog	Macaw
Cat	Panther Chameleon
Hamster	Radiated Tortoise
Gerbil	Ball Python
Domestic Rabbit	Madagascar Hissing Cockroach
Domestic Rat	Tomato Frog
Domestic Ferret	Giant Day Gecko
Guinea Pig	Capuchin Monkey
Pony	Clown Fish

2. Instruct each student to select a species (or assign each student a species) to research. Once they have selected the animal, instruct students to research the answers to the questions on the research sheet to learn more about the species in captivity.

3. Students will need to determine the cost of food, housing and care for a week, a month and a year. Include everything they might need to set-up (tank, cage or kennel, accessories, etc.) and maintain

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their pet (food, heating or lighting, bedding, vitamins and nutritional supplements, etc.)

3. When collected from the wild, the cost of owning a wild/exotic animal is also measured by the impact their absence has on their natural habitat. If their species is a wild or exotic species, students should answer the questions: What is the cost to the environment and the other species that live there? Remember that every species plays an important role in their environment. Perhaps the species serves as prey (food) for another species. Perhaps it's a key pollinator or seed disperser for an important plant. If the species is a predator perhaps its role keeps other species numbers in check so they don't exceed the habitat's resources.
4. Any other elements that are contributing to the decline of the species in the wild should also be included in the student's presentation. Although collection of wild animals for the pet trade threatens certain species, often other threats like habitat loss and climate change are even greater problems and should be covered in the presentation.

WRAP-UP

After the presentations, discuss the following questions as a class:

- What surprised you the most about keeping an exotic/domestic pet?
- Did owning an exotic/domestic pet cost more or less than you expected?
- What were the largest expenses?
- Based on your research, what do you think would be the most difficult part of owning an exotic/domestic pet?
- What are some ways that collecting species from the wild has impacted their environment?
- Would you purchase a pet if you knew it came from the wild?
- What are some questions you will ask the next time you choose a pet, exotic or domestic?
- How many of you would still like to own an exotic pet?

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EVALUATION

Evaluate the student's presentations and their response to the wrap-up questions to determine their understanding of the key concepts presented in the activity.

THIS ACTIVITY MEETS THE FOLLOWING NATIONAL AND FLORIDA EDUCATION STANDARDS

NATIONAL SCIENCE STANDARDS

2-3rd Grade

Characteristics of organisms
Organisms and environments
Changes in environments

NEXT GENERATION NATIONAL SCIENCE STANDARDS

2nd grade: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: 2-LS2-2

3rd Grade: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: 3-LS4-1

FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

2nd Grade Science

SC.2.L.17.1

SC.2.L.17.2

2nd Grade Language Arts:

LAFS.2.RI.4.10

LAFS.2.RL.1.1

LAFS.2.RL.1.3

LAFS.2.W.2.6

LAFS.2.W.3.7

LAFS.2.W.3.8

2nd Grade Social Studies:

SS.2.C.2.4

3rd Grade Science

SC.3.N.1.1

SC.3.N.1.3

SC.35.CS-CP.3.2

3rd Grade Language Arts:

LAFS.3.RI.1.1

LAFS.3.RL.1.3

LAFS.3.W.2.6

LAFS.3.W.3.7

LAFS.K12.W.3.9

3rd Grade Social Studies:

SS.3.A.1.2

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Research Team Members _____

The animal our team selected is the _____

General Information

Expected Life Span _____

Maximum Length & Weight _____

Initial Cost to Purchase the Animal _____

Is it legal to own this pet where you live? _____

Are there any safety concerns to consider? _____

Who will care for the animal when you are on vacation? _____

Conservation

What is the conservation status of this species in the wild? (Is it rare or threatened?) _____

Is this animal bred in captivity or taken from the wild? If taken from the wild, how is it collected (captured) and transported? _____

What is the percentage of animals that are killed or injured during the capture and transport process? _____

How will the plant or animal species that share its habitat be affected in its absence? _____

Who will care for the animal if you are no longer able or willing to care for it? (Few zoos have space to take unwanted exotic pets.) _____

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Care: Habitat

In the wild this animal is found in the following wild habitat(s) _____

Describe an appropriate captive habitat _____

Costs for habitat set-up include (Be sure to include all materials and costs needed for set-up) _____

Does it require special lighting? _____

Does it require a heat source? _____

What type of bedding/substrate/water does it require? _____

What is the minimum tank or enclosure size? _____

Describe additional tank/enclosure requirements (e. g. hide or climbing structures) _____

How frequently does the bedding/substrate/water need to be changed? _____

Care: Diet

What does this animal eat in the wild? _____

What is this animal's recommended diet in captivity? _____

What type of food supplements/vitamins are required or recommended? _____

How often does it require feeding? _____

What is the cost of feeding annually? _____

Does this animal need access to water? Is tap water safe or does it have specific watering needs? Describe the type of water dispenser it would require _____

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Care: Safety and Veterinary Care

Does this animal require regular veterinary visits? _____

What's the average cost of a veterinary visit? _____

Is there a veterinarian available in your area trained to treat this species? (Most veterinarians lack the specialized training required to treat exotic species.) _____

Does this animal have special care requirements that are beyond the ability of the average pet owner? _____

Does this animal have any known diseases or common health problems? _____

Is this species known to have any diseases that could be transferred to humans? _____

Care: Total Expenses

How much will it cost to purchase this animal along with initial food and housing? _____

How much will it cost per year to own this animal? _____

How much will it cost to own this animal for its entire expected life span? _____

How much time will it take each day to properly care for this animal? _____

Final Recommendation

Based on our research, we recommend:

- A. That only a highly trained person should own this animal.
- B. That anyone can own this animal.
- C. That only an adult should own this animal.
- D. That a child can own this animal.
- E. That no one should own this animal.