

Topic: Endangered Animals News

Alabama Science Standard(s)

Grade 3

3: Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits: Inherited Traits and Environmental 7: Use evidence to support a claim that traits can be influenced by the environment.

3: Unity and Diversity: Biodiversity 9: Construct an explanation from evidence of how variations in characteristics among individuals of the same species may provide advantages in surviving, finding mates, and reproducing.

3: Unity and Diversity: Biodiversity 10: Make a claim from evidence that an organism's likelihood of survival depends upon access to sufficient resources in its habitat, including sunlight, air, water, food, and shelter.

3: Unity and Diversity: Human Impact 12: Obtain and communicate information regarding the impact of existing solutions on plant and animal populations when environmental changes occur.

- 3-LS4-4: Make a claim about how changes in habitat can affect organisms.
- 3-ESS3-1: Evaluate solutions that reduce human impact on the environment.

Grade 4

4: From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes: Internal and External Structures 8: Make a claim, using evidence, that the functions of both internal and external structures of plants and animals (including humans) support growth, survival, and behavior.

4: Earth and Human Activity: Natural Resources 14: Gather information to describe how the use of energy derived from renewable and nonrenewable resources affects the environment.

- 4-LS1-1: Use evidence to show how structures and behaviors support survival.
- 4-ESS3-1: Obtain and communicate information about protecting Earth's resources.

Grade 5

5: Earth's Systems: System Interactions 12: Use a model to represent how any two of Earth's systems (atmosphere, biosphere, geosphere, and hydrosphere) interact and support life.

5: Earth and Human Activity: Human Impact 14: Obtain and evaluate information to communicate how science-based solutions are being used to protect Earth's natural resources and its environment.

- 5-LS2-1: Develop models to describe interactions within ecosystems.
- 5-ESS3-1: Obtain and combine information about ways communities protect environments.

(Strong crosscutting concepts: Cause & Effect, Systems, Human Impact)

Lesson Objective:

Students will be able to:

- Describe an endangered Alabama plant or animal.
- Explain reasons why the species is endangered or extirpated.
- Communicate scientific information accurately through creative writing.
- Identify ways people can help protect endangered species in Alabama.

Background:

Alabama is home to many plants and animals, but some are in danger of disappearing forever. Compared to other states, Alabama has one of the highest numbers of endangered and threatened species in the country.

Some species are endangered because of habitat loss, pollution, invasive species, or human activities. When a species disappears from Alabama but still lives in other places, it is called extirpated.

Learning about endangered species helps students understand why it is important to protect Alabama's natural resources.

Vocabulary:

- Endangered** – a plant or animal that is in danger of becoming extinct
- Extirpated** – a plant or animal that no longer lives in an area but still exists elsewhere

Academic Language:

Grade 3-5 (can be aligned to other grades/subjects)

Length of Lesson: 60 minutes

Materials:

Photographs of endangered and threatened species
Local newspapers or magazines

INSTRUCTIONS:

Part 1: Research & Preparation

1. Teacher selects several Alabama endangered or threatened species (plants and animals).
 - Examples: Red Hills salamander, Alabama beach mouse, flattened musk turtle, pitcher plants.
2. Students work in small groups to research:
 - Habitat
 - Why the species is endangered
 - How people can help protect it
3. Use approved sources such as:
 - Alabama Natural Heritage Program
 - Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
 - Age-appropriate articles or videos

Part 2: Understanding a Newspaper

1. Examine a local newspaper (print or digital).
2. Discuss:
 - Sections (front page, comics, sports, life & leisure)
 - Headlines, images, advertisements, and captions
3. Compare how information is presented differently in each section.

Part 3: Newspaper from a Species' Point of View

1. The class creates a newspaper written from the point of view of endangered species.
2. Each group chooses a section:
 - Front Page – news article about habitat loss or protection
 - Comics – short comic showing a problem the species faces
 - Life & Leisure – “A Day in My Habitat”
 - Ads – public service announcements asking humans for help
3. Requirements:
 - Writing must include factual information
 - Use the species' voice, but keep facts accurate
 - Create a headline
 - Include at least one illustration or graphic

Part 4: Assembly & Sharing

1. Groups work together to design the class newspaper layout.
2. Students share their articles and explain:
 - Why their species is endangered
 - What humans can do to help

EVALUATION:

Product-Based Assessment (Rubric Recommended):

- Accurate scientific facts
- Clear explanation of why the species is endangered
- Creativity and clarity
- Participation and collaboration

EXTENSION:

1. Research additional Alabama endangered species
2. Write a letter to a wildlife agency explaining why protection matters
3. Create a digital newspaper or slideshow
4. Compare endangered species in Alabama to those in another state
5. Invite a conservationist or wildlife biologist to speak

ALABAMA in 5: Turtles

Alabama is home to many plants and animals, including several kinds of turtles, but some are in danger of disappearing forever. Compared to other states, Alabama has one of the highest numbers of endangered and threatened species, including turtles that live in rivers, wetlands, and forests.

Some Alabama turtles are endangered because of habitat loss, pollution, invasive species, and human activities such as road building and water pollution. When a turtle species disappears from Alabama but still lives in other places, it is called extirpated.

Learning about endangered turtles helps students understand why it is important to protect Alabama's natural resources. Protecting turtle habitats helps keep Alabama's ecosystems healthy for all living things.

REFERENCES:

Encyclopedia of Alabama. (n.d.). *Endangered and threatened animal species of Alabama*.
<https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/endangered-and-threatened-animal-species-of-alabama/>

NOAA Fisheries. (n.d.). *Threatened and endangered species list: Alabama*.
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/consultations/threatened-and-endangered-species-list-alabama>

Alabama in 5: Turtles (Box Turtle, Gopher Tortoise)