



# Acting Out for Species at Risk

## Summary

Students will research a species at risk that lives in a forested habitat and prepare a television public service announcement (PSA) aimed at helping to preserve the species.

## Activity Information

**Level:** Grades 4, 6 and 7 (elementary cycles 2, 3; sec. I)

**Subjects:** Habitats and Communities, Diversity of Life, Science, Language Arts, Drama, Geography

**Estimated Duration:** One 60-minute class period for discussion, one 60-minute period for research and development of the PSA, one 60-minute period to present PSAs. Homework may be required to complete the PSA.

**Materials:** markers, construction paper.

## Learning Outcomes

### Habitats and Communities

Identify their own and their family's impact on natural resources (e.g., identify the potential impact of their lifestyle on moose, deer, rabbit or salmon habitats and populations).

Relate habitat loss to the endangerment or extinction of plants and animals.

Compile and display data, by hand or by computer, in a variety of formats including frequency tallies, tables and bar graphs (e.g., display data in a graph from a population-simulation game).

### Diversity of Life

Describe the potential impact of the use by humans of regional natural resources (e.g., identify the possible impact on the local deer population).

## Teacher Background

Every day, our human population is growing. With this growing population comes the need for more space – space for houses, space for schools, space for parks and soccer pitches. This need for space places demands on the environment and other habitats. So, as the need for more land area increases, so does our need to protect and conserve forests and other ecosystems, ensuring that they are managed in a sustainable way.

Canada has a variety of forest types – you can find more information about the forest regions on the Natural Resources Canada Web site at:

[www.nrcan.gc.ca/cfs-scf/national/what-quoi/sof/common/maps\\_e.html](http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/cfs-scf/national/what-quoi/sof/common/maps_e.html)

They include the boreal forest, a diverse forest ecosystem that stretches from Newfoundland to the Yukon across the centre of the country, ([www.borealcanada.ca/about\\_boreal\\_e.cfm](http://www.borealcanada.ca/about_boreal_e.cfm)) and the Carolinian forest, a unique deciduous forest community in southwestern Ontario.

The boreal forest is home to tree species that include spruce, balsam fir, poplar and jack pine, and wildlife species that include red squirrels, wolverines, grizzly and black bears, Sparrows, Golden Eye Ducks, Chickadees, and even salamanders. Wildfires are common – in fact trees such as jack pine need the high temperatures that a fire brings to release the seeds from their cones. See the following Web site to learn about a major initiative to conserve the boreal forest for future generations: [www.ducks.ca/conservator/243/boreal1.html](http://www.ducks.ca/conservator/243/boreal1.html)

The Carolinian forest is home to a remarkable diversity of wildlife species and spaces, many found nowhere else in the country. Black walnut, Kentucky coffee trees, the tulip poplar and black gum are only a few of the very interesting and assorted tree species. It is home to songbirds galore, including the endangered Prothonotary and threatened Hooded Warblers, as well as the eastern mole, southern flying squirrel and American badger, all designated as species at risk.

There are many more forest communities in Canada, and all of them are home to at least one species at risk. Forest communities have different reasons why some of their inhabitants are at risk – it could be the result of urban development, harvesting techniques, agricultural expansion, power corridors, mining, or oil and gas exploration and transportation.

This activity has students preparing a PSA that will help protect and conserve species at risk. PSAs are specially designed advertisements or commercials that radio or TV stations air at no cost as a public service. They are designed to persuade the audience to take a specific action or adopt a particular view toward some service, issue or cause.

What is important to understand is that a PSA cannot sell a product, and since it is not paid time (meaning the radio or TV station doesn't make money by running it), it has to be very appealing and creative or it won't be aired.

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## Procedure

**1** Begin this activity with a class discussion about the different forested areas in Canada. Help your students understand that each forest ecosystem is quite different, with different soils, tree and animal species, different kinds of aquatic systems and landforms, and with that kind of variety, many different habitats are available.

**2** Divide your class into groups of two to three students each. Each group will represent individual marketing firms who have been hired by a forest ecosystem. Their job is to create a PSA for television that will do the following:

- Present information about your client, the forest community. What do the species in the forest need the forest for? Habitat. What do humans use the forest for? Recreation, forest products, aesthetic and spiritual reasons, etc. Be sure to also consider the wetlands, lakes and waterways that are an important part of the forest.
- Identify three species at risk (plant or animal) that use the forest ecosystem for their habitat.
- Explain what activities are taking place that are damaging critical habitat for these species.
- How is conservation of the forest and other ecosystems like wetlands and grasslands important to reducing the effects of climate change? Could global warming also affect species at risk?
- Present a message to the audience that this forest must be managed sustainably if the species at risk is going to recover.

Students can choose from the following forest communities. Once they have chosen their forest, they can carry out research to identify the species at risk that use the forest as habitat:

- Boreal forest
- Acadian (encompasses most of the Maritime Provinces and is closely related to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest region)
- Carolinian forest
- West Coast (the coastal region of British Columbia)
- Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest
- Your own local community woodlands.

**3** Once the students have researched their forests and species at risk, give them sufficient time to write the script for their PSA. Each student must have a role in the PSA. They must hand in their scripts for approval prior to the presentations to ensure that they have covered the criteria for the PSA sufficiently and to ensure that it is bias-free.

Students should understand that broadcasters (radio and television) choose to run public service announcements to support local non-commercial causes.

They can be reminded that their PSA, like any advertisement, is competing for public attention so they need to find a way to present their case in an appealing way – both so that the broadcasters will use it and so that listeners will pay attention and act on it.

**4** After you have read and approved the scripts, give the students some rehearsal time. Once they are prepared, set aside one class period for presentations of the PSAs.

**Note:** You may choose to have students videotape their PSA ahead of time instead of actually presenting it in front of the class.

## Extensions

Videotape the PSA presentations and share with other classes.

Take those videotapes and share with other local schools during National Forest Week.

Ask a local person in the media or a communications expert to view the PSAs and offer advice to the students.



Small White  
Lady's Slipper  
*Cypripedium candidum*