



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Protect Turtles!

Grade Level: 5-7

Objective: Students will understand that actions of humans can affect the environment and the animals who live there. Students will recognize ways that they can help to protect turtles.

Character Concept: Fairness means being considerate of the needs of others and taking only your fair share. When making decisions that influence wildlife, be sure that the animals will have their basic needs met in order to thrive.

Curriculum Connection: Students will understand the concept of extinction and that humans can have an effect on whether an animal becomes extinct. Humans can cause an ecosystem to become unbalanced due to fishing, construction, road development, and other use of resources. They will identify ways that humans have affected turtles and propose solutions to reduce the impact. Students will develop educational pamphlets to be showcased in the community.

Standards Addressed:

[NS.5-8.3](#) (Populations and Ecosystems, Diversity and Adaptations of Organisms)

Materials Needed:

- *Turtle World* article printed at the end of this lesson
- White drawing paper or construction paper
- Access a computer program such as Microsoft Word (optional)
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers
- The following web resources:
 - http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/turtles_tortoises/tips/celebrate_world_turtle_day.html
 - http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/wildlife_roads/facts/box_turtle_road.html
 - http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/turtles_tortoises/tips/turtle_road.html?credit=web_id86191664
 - http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/turtles_tortoises/#id=album-164&num=content-3048
 - http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/fisheries/facts/turtle_excluder_device_ted.html
- example pamphlet for student reference
- stickers or pictures of turtles (optional)

Lesson Preparation:

1. Print out the above listed web resources or arrange for students to access them on the computer.
2. Make copies of the *Turtle World article* for each student.

Lesson Procedure

Opening:

1. Pass out copies of *Turtle World article* or project the paper on a SmartBoard.
2. Ask students if they know what extinction is. Review that extinction does happen naturally in some cases, but in other cases extinction happens because of things humans do to the ecosystem.
3. Tell the students they are about to read a story about turtles and there may be some information about problems turtles are facing that could cause them to become extinct. As they read they should underline any specific problems they see. (If reading on a SmartBoard screen use the provided board pens to underline problems the students point out.)

Lesson Body:

1. Ask the class to read the *Turtle World article*.
2. Draw a T-chart on the board as seen below.

Problems Facing Turtles

Ways to Help Protect Turtles

3. Ask students to work with the teacher to create a list on the board of the problems they found in the story. These should be listed on the left side of the T-chart under the title “Problems Facing Turtles”. (Problems may include):

- harmful fishing techniques
- pollution
- hunting of turtles and their eggs
- coastal development
- taking wild turtles as pets
- cars hitting turtles crossing the road

This list should remain up for the remainder of the lesson.

4. Tell the students that they are going to try and help turtles by creating informational pamphlets about how people can protect turtles from extinction.

5. Ask the students to help find different solutions to the problems faced by turtles. Pass out copies of “Celebrate World Turtle Day” located at http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/turtles_tortoises/tips/celebrate_world_turtle_day.html

Students can use the sites listed in the Materials section above for research as well.

6. Ask students to read the articles and underline potential solutions.

7. With students, create a list of solutions to protect turtles. These should be listed on the right side of the T-chart under the title “Ways to Help Protect Turtles”. Solutions should include (but are not limited to):

- If one sees a turtle crossing the road move it in the direction it was headed (off of the road)
- Protect turtle habitats limiting development (especially in coastal areas)
- Pick up trash and do not litter because turtles suffer suffocation, strangulation, or blocked digestive tracts if they ingest trash thinking it is food.
- Do not take turtles from the wild or have turtles as pets
- Support legislation that stops the exporting of turtles for food in foreign countries.

8. Review the making of a pamphlet with students. (You can choose a bi-fold or tri-fold pamphlet, or small booklet-type of brochure.) If students will be using a computer program such as Microsoft Word, show them how to use pre-made templates to create their brochures. Students should be reminded that information in a pamphlet should be given a heading and details should be bulleted or numbered. Show an example of another pamphlet as a reference.

9. Write on the board (or create a pamphlet checklist to pass out- optional) that students’ pamphlets should contain:

- Title or topic page as the first page
- Description of turtles and the basic needs and/or habitats of turtles
- Problem(s) turtles are facing
- Proposed solution to the problems
- How to learn more about turtles (web sites or recommended books)
- Pictures or drawings to add interest

10. Pass out paper to be used by students in pamphlet creation. (Work may be done at home or during the lesson.)

Closure:

1. Prepare a gallery walk in which students place their pamphlet on their desk and students walk around the room to view the pamphlets of others. (While students are walking around the room erase the “solutions” side of the T-chart.)

2. With the class, review the definition of extinction and the problems faced by turtles.

3. Ask students to place the “solutions” back on the T-chart using the information they learned during the gallery walk.

4. Collect the pamphlets and place them on display in your library, community center, school cafeteria or other public location.

Extension:

1. Have a World Turtle Day celebration on May 23. See www.tortoise.com for more information.
2. Share tips to help wildlife that appear in the article “Shoot to Save Wildlife” at http://www.humanesociety.org/about/departments/students/actions/shoot_to_save_wildlife.html. Brainstorm with students which actions they think they could do and assist them with formulating plans to follow through.

Turtle World!

From dry deserts to deep seas, lush rainforests to your own backyard, turtles are found in nearly every corner of the world. They were here before dinosaurs roamed the planet, first appearing more than 200 million years ago. Yet, despite surviving on Earth for so long, many turtles are now becoming rare.

Enter American Tortoise Rescue (www.tortoise.com), a turtle and tortoise rescue group in California. To draw attention to the problems turtles face, in 2000 the group declared May 23 World Turtle Day. The state of Hawaii soon followed suit, naming the same date as Sea Turtle Day.

Now You Sea Me, Now You Don't

Sea turtles are among the most endangered animals on the planet. Harmful fishing techniques, pollution, and hunting of the turtles and their eggs have all caused sea turtle populations to



drop. What's more, coastal development is taking away more and more of the beaches where sea turtles lay their eggs.

Sea turtles aren't the only turtles in trouble. Land turtles and tortoises are also in danger of disappearing for good.

Millions are taken from the wild each year. Many are shipped to Asia, where they're used as food and in medicines. Others are sold as pets. In fact, turtles are the U.S.'s most popular pet reptile, even though they carry disease and are tough to care for properly.



Turning the Tide

Turtles may soon face extinction—if *nothing is done*. Here are some ways you can help turn the tide for turtles.

- Organize a World Turtle Day celebration on May 23. Let others know about the threats to turtles and what they can do to help. Go to www.humanesociety.org and type "turtles" into the search field.
- Don't buy turtles as pets or take them from the wild. Already have a pet turtle? Read up on how best to take care of him, and always wash your hands after handling him.
- Don't buy trinkets or souvenirs made from turtle parts.
- Never pollute or litter.
- Protect turtle and tortoise habitats.

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