



Picketing for Plovers

Grade Level: 6-8

Subject Areas: science,
art

Duration:
Preparation - 20
minutes
Activity - two 50 minute
periods

Setting:
Classroom

Group Size:
6-30 students

Materials:
• poster board - one per
group of 2-3 students
• markers or paint
• small wooden stakes
• access to internet or
other research methods

Skills Used:
researching, group work,
educating

Vocabulary:
threatened, endangered

Project BEAK Links:
• [The Rare Ones](#)

OBJECTIVES

- Students learn about threatened and endangered birds and what causes species to become threatened and endangered.
- Students learn ways humans can help threatened and endangered species populations recover.
- Students help educate their classmates, school mates, family, and friends about Nebraska's endangered bird species.

Nebraska State Science Standards

- 8.4.4, 8.4.5

BACKGROUND

There are a wide variety of reasons why an animal may become threatened or endangered. Habitat loss, habitat degradation, and historically unregulated hunting are the most common (see inset box). Often before a species is listed as threatened or endangered, it is first listed as an "At-Risk Species." This means that although the species is not threatened or endangered, it is headed in that direction. If the species' population continues to decline, it is then listed as threatened. Following careful analysis and much research, the species is listed as endangered if the population drops to a point where it would be extremely difficult for the population to recover without help.

There are nearly 9,000 species in the U.S. listed on the Fish and Wildlife Service's Federally Endangered Species list. Seventeen of these species are in Nebraska.

In addition to the federally listed species, there are also Nebraska state listed species. All federally listed species are on the Nebraska State List. However, all Nebraska listed species are not on the Federal list. For example, Saltwort (*Salicornia rubra*) is on the Nebraska State Endangered Species List due to its limited range within the state. Saltwort is not on the Federal list and is in fact common on the East Coast.

One species which is on both the Federal Threatened Species List and the Nebraska State Threatened Species List is the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*).



Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) are a Federally and Nebraska state listed threatened species. (Photo courtesy The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership).

The Piping Plover is a medium-sized bird (6½ inches beak to tail) with a large wingspan (15 inches). They are identified by their buff-colored back, white chest, and distinctive black neck band. They are often confused with Killdeer which have two black neck bands.

Piping Plovers are found along bare sandbars in the Platte River. They are subject to habitat loss and predation.

ACTIVITY, PART 1

Start the activity by asking students to define the terms “threatened” and “endangered.” Ask students what causes species to become threatened, endangered or extinct. Spend some time having a class discussion about the causes of animals becoming endangered or extinct (habitat loss, natural disasters, unregulated hunting).

Ask students if they can name any threatened or endangered species. You may have students point out that there are federally listed threatened and endangered species and state listed species. Species which are listed at the state level may or may not be listed at the federal level. All federally listed species, however, are on state lists. For a complete list of Nebraska’s threatened and endangered species, visit www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/programs/nongame.

ACTIVITY, PART 2

Ask students to get in groups of 2-3 students. Have each group research one of Nebraska’s threatened or endangered bird species. See the next page for a complete list of Nebraska’s threatened and endangered bird species.

Give each group time to research their species. They should determine the following things:

- scientific name of the species
- wintering and breeding location
- habitat the bird lives in (i.e. wetlands, prairie)
- what kinds of food the bird prefers
- breeding behavior (how many eggs, how many typically survive, how many clutches they have per year, etc.)
- why the species is considered threatened or endangered (habitat loss, unregulated hunting, etc.)
- what is being done to help the population recover.

ACTIVITY, PART 3

Give each group a piece of poster board (preferably at least 3 ft. by 4 ft.).

Ask groups to create a “picket” sign for their bird. The sign should encourage people to “Save the Species,” “Help the birds” or “Preserve Birds,” etc.)

Once groups have completed their sign, attach the sign to the wooden stakes. Hang the signs around the classroom or around the school grounds.

EXTENSIONS

- Have students go on a parade through the school holding their picket signs and shouting for their species.
- Have students create a U-Tube video about their species and why they care about threatened and endangered species.
- Hold a school-wide fund drive (i.e. penny drive or collecting cans for cash) to donate to an organization devoted to helping threatened and endangered species. Example organizations include:
 - Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership (Lincoln, NE)
 - The Nature Conservancy, Nebraska Chapter
 - Audubon, Nebraska Chapter

ASSESSMENT

- Have a classroom discussion about endangered species, why species become threatened or endangered, and what students can do to help species recover.
- Ask student groups to write a report on their species detailing all the information in Part 2 of the activity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership
ternandplover.unl.edu
- The Nature Conservancy, Nebraska Chapter
www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/nebraska
- Audubon Society, Nebraska Chapter
www.audubon.org/chapter/ne
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species
www.fws.gov/endangered
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/programs/nongame
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Educator and Kids Webpage
www.fws.gov/endangered/kids/index.html

Nebraska's Threatened and Endangered Bird Species

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Federal Status</u>	<u>State Status</u>
Eskimo Curlew	<i>Numenius borealis</i>	endangered	endangered
Whooping Crane	<i>Grus americana</i>	endangered	endangered
Interior Least Tern	<i>Sternula antillarum athalassos</i>	endangered	endangered
Piping Plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	threatened	threatened
Mountain Plover	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>		threatened



Students show their "Picket Signs" encouraging people to "Save the Mountain Plovers."



PERMISSIONS & CREDITS

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