

MY NATURE PHOTO ESSAY



CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION'S

ONLINE
Classroom

Subject:

Photography, Conservation,
Biodiversity, Language, Human impacts

Time:

90 minutes

Grades:

4-12

*This activity was inspired by Jesse Hildebrand's campaign called **Care For Life** which encourages people to document living things in natural habitats to which they have a special connection. Care for Life is a storytelling and photo project centred around the hashtag #CareForLife.*

What to know before getting started:

There is a saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. Have you ever thought about how photography, nature and conservation are connected? Photographers, documentary filmmakers and people from around the world use photography and film to help illustrate the effects of climate change, the evolution of natural spaces due to human and natural influence, and the importance of natural spaces, wild animals, and wild plants to different ecosystems. Thanks to these images, we are able to learn about plants and animals from all over the world and the threats they face. This can give us a better appreciation of how our daily habits, such as the products we buy and the amount of trash we throw away, can influence a country on the other side of the planet. It also helps us realize that there are living things in our own neighbourhoods that are affected

Activity time!

Read this first...

A photo essay is created by assembling a series of photographs in a certain order with the goal being to bring about emotion in the viewer and to take the viewer through a story from start to finish. This type of visual essay will often show pictures that are connected by a central theme but vary in their subject matter and composition. Photo essays can be made using only photos, or a mixture of photos and photo captions which are short descriptions of what the photographs are showing.

...then follow these instructions

Start this activity by thinking about a place that is nearby and in a natural state, such as a forest or a park, or an animal or plant in your area with which you have a special connection. Is it a bird that signals the start of spring every year? Is it a tree that you pass by on your weekly walk that changes with every season? Is it a field of wildflowers that blooms every summer?

Stop and think: Why do you have a personal connection to this living thing? What is your earliest memory of it? How does thinking about it make you feel? What does it remind you of?

Now that you have this living thing in your mind, think about what it needs to survive in its habitat, how it contributes to the surrounding ecosystem and how it benefits from that ecosystem. Visit the websites of local wildlife organizations, or visit the [Canadian Wildlife Federation](#) for information on different species across Canada!

Stop and think: What types of things grow or live around this living thing or in this natural space? Why do these things grow and not others? Why is this living thing important for the ecosystem in which it lives? How could humans have an impact on this living thing or its habitat? What would happen if this living thing disappeared?

Now that you have learned about your living thing and reflected on its personal meaning to you and its importance within its ecosystem, it's time to think about how to convince others of its importance and the need to protect it. Get your camera and start thinking like a photographer! Your task is to create a photo essay that teaches others about this living thing, the importance of it to the local ecosystem, and steps that can be taken to help protect it. Consider these questions while planning your essay:

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by human actions. This activity will have you thinking like a photographer by having you create a photo essay of nature around you!

Materials you will need:

- Device that can take photos (e.g., iPad, cellphone, digital camera)
- Paper and writing utensils
- Access to the internet

- Where does this living thing live?
- What does this living thing need to survive?
- What are some potential threats to this living thing?
- What are some solutions to these threats?
- What can people do to help protect this living thing?

Next, create a plan for your project. What is the main message you would like to tell your audience? How will you break that message down into smaller parts? What images would best illustrate that message and the smaller parts? What is the plan for obtaining those images safely? What shots would have the most impact? Use the outline below as a guide:

Main message:

Smaller parts of project to support my main message:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Images that I need to capture to illustrate my message:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How people can take action:

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If you can safely do so, go outside to photograph your living thing and the place around it to build your essay. Consider these important safety precautions:

- Don't touch plants or animals while doing this exercise.
- Be aware of your surroundings and only go where it is safe.
- Stay with your parent/guardian while exploring.
- Don't go onto people's properties without their permission.
- Be respectful of nature by not touching living things and leaving no trace by staying on trails and leaving nature where you found it.

If you can't obtain photographs, consider drawing the photograph you would have liked to have taken, or obtain photographs online that you have permission to use (e.g., photos that are in the public domain or that the photographer allows for use if you credit them).

Stop and think: How can photographs help educate people? How can photographs help to convince people to take action? What photography techniques could you use to help support your message? How can local conservation projects have an impact globally? How can our everyday actions make a difference?

Now that you have your photos, create your photo essay using your outline as a guide. Lay out your photos in an order that takes your viewer through a story. Print them, put them together as a slideshow, or create a video. Be creative—there's no wrong way to do it!

Now, share your work with others. You have created a project that can help raise awareness about living things in your area. Well done!

Share your learning adventure with us!

We want to see your amazing photos! Tag @CanGeoEdu on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram and show us what nature means to you using the hashtags #CareForLife and #OnlineClassroom!

Other ways to complete this activity:

- Draw your living thing instead of photographing it.
- Share your project with family members, friends, and the community to help spread your message.
- Instead of a living thing, document a place.