



An introduction to the threats marine wildlife face in their habitats

You will need

- [Endangered animal fact cards](#)
- Large sheets of paper with the words 'overfishing,' 'habitat loss,' 'caught in fishing nets,' and 'pollution' written on them
- Large sheets of fabric for *Let's go fishing* game
- [Fishing catch sheet](#)

This activity supports Requirement 2d of Cubs Animal Carer Activity Badge.

What to do

Animal facts

1. Divide everyone into pairs and give each pair a set of [fact cards](#). This is a Top Trumps-style game where the cards give facts about eight endangered marine animals in the UK.
2. Each player in the pair should take 4 cards. The players should take it in turns to choose a category. Whoever has the highest number for the category wins the card.
3. The players should keep playing until one player has all the cards.

Dangers in the deep

The terms 'vulnerable,' 'endangered,' and 'critically endangered' on the cards refer to the risk to the species of becoming extinct. These species are all at high risk of extinction and global action is needed to prevent them dying out in the wild. Talk about the meaning of the terms before starting.

1. The animals on the cards are under threat from: overfishing, being caught by mistake in fishing nets, climate change destroying their habitats, and pollution.
 - European eel - critically endangered from overfishing
 - Angel shark - critically endangered from being caught in fishing nets and habitat destruction
 - Sei whale - endangered from overfishing
 - Cod - vulnerable from overfishing
 - Fanshell - critically endangered from habitat loss
 - Velvet scoter - vulnerable from oil pollution and lack of food from their feed being overfished
 - Short snouted seahorse - the population is declining and cannot be counted. Under threat from habitat loss and pollution
 - Common skate - critically endangered from being caught in nets.



2. Place the sheets of labelled paper around the room. Read out the name of each species in turn and ask everyone to run to the sign that they think is the biggest threat to the species. Each time, talk about the challenges faced by the species. It's unlikely that anyone will know the causes; this activity aims to allow everyone to be active while learning.

Let's go fishing

Play a version of 'stuck in the mud' to help everyone understand the impact of different methods of fishing on fish stocks.

1. Mark out a playing area and line everyone up on one side. These are the 'fish' who must run to the other side without being caught. Choose a 'fisher'. This person's job is to catch fish by tapping them on the arm as they run past. Once a fish is caught, they are out of the game.
2. Ask everyone to run across the playing area. How many fish are caught?
3. Now change the rules. Fish who are caught turn into fishers. How many fish are caught?
4. Finally give large sheets to two pairs of people. How many fish can they catch in the sheets?
5. Talk about how many fish were caught by the different fishing methods. Link this to overfishing and the problems with too many fish being taken from the ocean.

Catch it if you can

This game shows the effect of catching too many of one type of fish. You will need:

- For each player, a spoon, pot and [Fishing catch sheet](#) (or piece of paper)
 - For each group of 6, a bowl filled with 30 dried peas, 30 popcorn kernels, 30 beads. You can use any items as long as they're sufficiently different.
 - Extra peas, kernels and beads for refills. There are 2 refills, max 60 of each type for each group needed if none were taken out.
1. Divide everyone into groups of six and give each group a bowl containing 30 dried peas (cod), 30 popcorn kernels (porpoise) and 30 beads (turtles). Give each person a spoon (net) and pot (boat).
 2. The aim is to use the spoon to catch as many 'cod' as possible. Try to avoid porpoise or turtles, but if they are caught, put them in the pot too. The group that catches the most cod will win.
 3. Fish for 20 seconds, then stop and record how many of each species each person caught.
 4. Top up the bowls by adding one new pea, kernel or bead for each one remaining in the bowl. Repeat the fishing twice.
 2. When fishing is finished, add up the totals. Which group caught the most cod? What strategy did they use? What did everyone think about how quickly the number of cod could decrease? What does this tell us about fishing?



Marine life vs marine litter

In small groups or as a pack, look at the [Marine life vs marine litter](#) sheet and talk about how each piece of litter could be a threat to the marine animal shown.

The [Marine Litter image reel](#) gives more detail of how marine life is affected by litter, but the images could be distressing for some people and it may not be appropriate to share them with everyone.

Marine litter vs marine life – Answers

Marine Litter – plastic bag, microplastic, fishing net, plastic drink yoke.

Turtle – plastic bags, net, yoke

Plankton – microplastics

Small fish – microplastics, net, yoke

Dolphin – plastic bags, net, yoke

Reflection

When people think of endangered animals, they often forget about those that live in the sea, but over 25,000 marine species are at risk of dying out.

The threats to marine animals are all a result of human actions. Can you think of three ways humans could change their behaviour to help marine life recover? Can you communicate these points in a poster?

Endangered UK marine animal fact cards

Image credits: European eel, Paul Naylor; Angelshark, Scuba Diverse via Shutterstock; Sei whale, HakBak via Shutterstock; Cod, Paul Naylor; Common skate, Calum Duncan; Short-snouted seahorse, ArtEvent ET via Shutterstock; Velvet scoter, Agami Photo Agency via Shutterstock; Fan mussel, Rohan Holt



European eel

Critically endangered

Max length: 1.3m
Max weight: 6.5kg
Max lifespan: 85yrs
Depth range: 700m
Max speed: 2.4kmh



Angelshark

Critically endangered

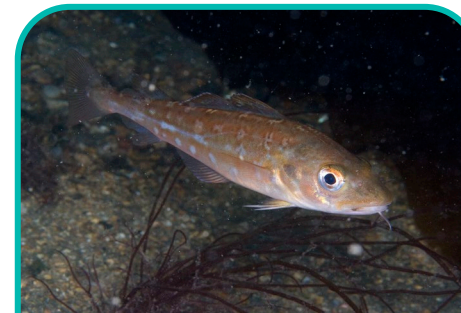
Max length: 2.4m
Max weight: 32kg
Max lifespan: 35yrs
Depth range: 150m
Max speed: Unknown



Sei whale

Endangered

Max length: 20m
Max weight: 28,000kg
Max lifespan: 60yrs
Depth range: 300m
Max speed: 50kmh



Cod

Vulnerable

Max length: 1.2m
Max weight: 40kg
Max lifespan: 25yrs
Depth range: 300m
Max speed: 8kmh



Common skate

Critically endangered

Max length: 2.5m
Max weight: 88kg
Max lifespan: 100yrs
Depth range: 600m
Max speed: 22.5kmh



Short-snouted seahorse

Not enough data

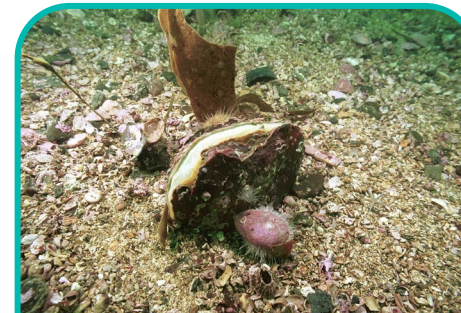
Max length: 0.2m
Max weight: 0.0018kg
Max lifespan: 5yrs
Depth range: 77m
Max speed: 0.001kmh



Velvet scoter

Vulnerable

Max length: 0.5m
Max weight: 1.2kg
Max lifespan: 12yrs
Depth range: 0m
Max speed: 2.4kmh



Fan mussel

Critically endangered

Max length: 0.5m
Max weight: 0.15kg
Max lifespan: 32yrs
Depth range: 400m
Max speed: 0kmh

Fishing catch

Name: _____



Cod



Porpoise



Turtles

Catch 1

	Cod	Porpoise	Turtles
Number caught			

Catch 2

	Cod	Porpoise	Turtles
Number caught			

Catch 3

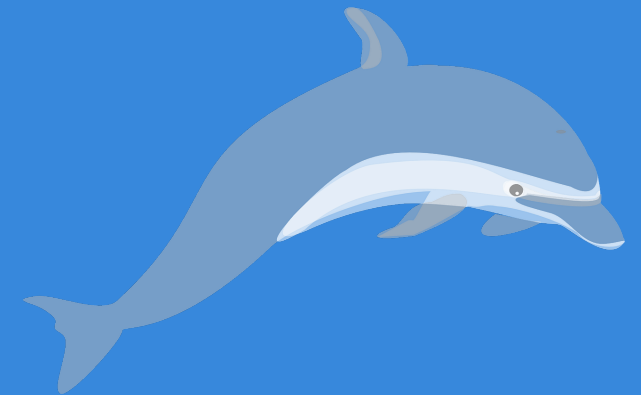
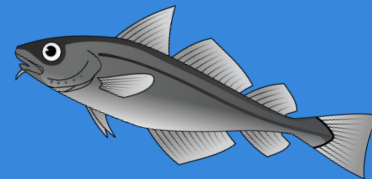
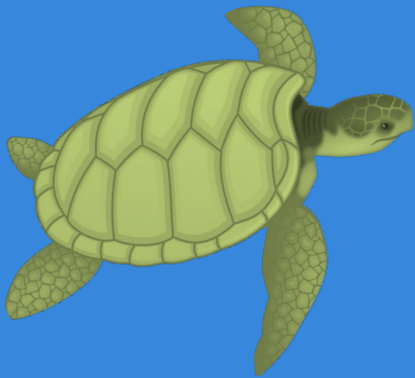
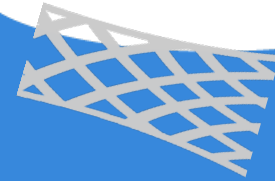
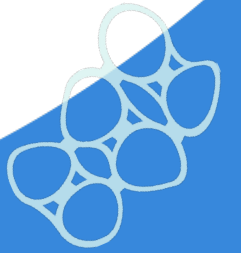
	Cod	Porpoise	Turtles
Number caught			

Overall

	Cod	Porpoise	Turtles
Total caught			
Total left in bowl			

Marine Life vs Marine Litter

How does litter harm wildlife?



Marine Litter Image Reel

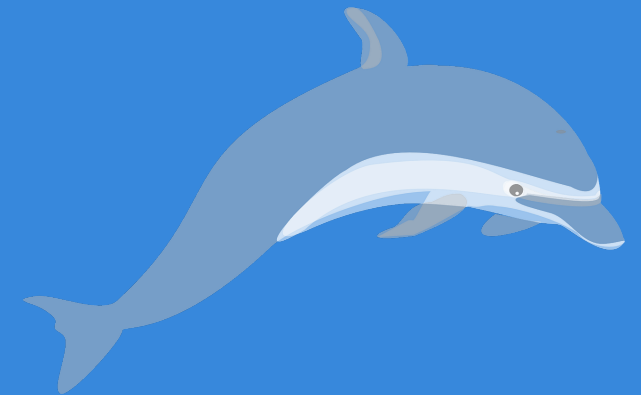
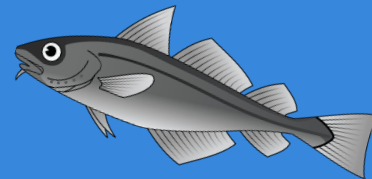
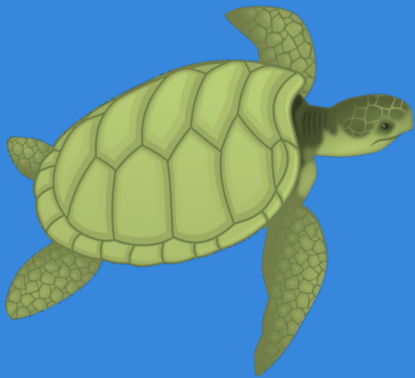
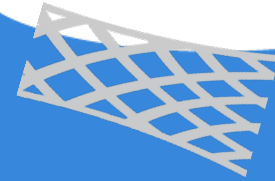
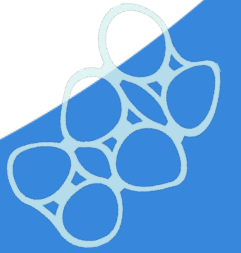




Litter reaches the ocean in a number of ways: it's washed in from our rivers, is left on our beaches, or is cast overboard from boats.

Marine Life vs Marine Litter

How does litter harm wildlife?





© A Different Perspective



© Tim Mossholder

Marine life

Litter items can cause harm to all sorts of marine life, from tiny plankton to whales. Ingestion of litter, particularly plastic, is very problematic for marine life who are unable to digest it.



Marine life

Animals can become entangled in litter, causing injury, reduced mobility and even death.

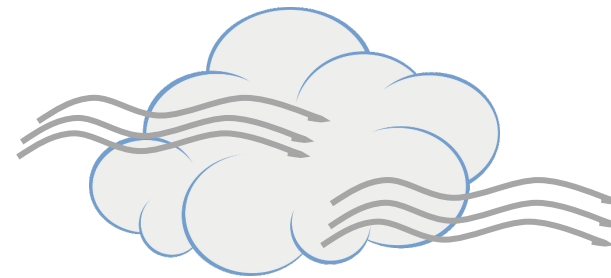
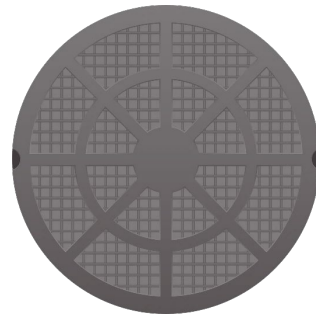


Microplastic pollution

Microplastics are a serious environmental issue. They are plastics that have broken up into pieces smaller than 5mm, as well as pieces that enter the environment this size like microfibres or plastic nurdles, which are the small plastic pellets used in the production of plastic products.

Sources

How does litter travel to the ocean?





Marine litter sources

Inland sources of litter can include intentional and accidental littering, items flushed down toilets, sinks and drains, windblown litter from bins and landfill, and litter carried by rainwater into drains rivers and eventually the sea.



Marine litter sources

Litter is also a problem at sea, with sources like fishing, sailing, speed boats, commercial ships and container spills causing litter pollution.



Litter timeline

Litter in the ocean takes longer to degrade than litter on land, but will eventually start to break up due to wave action, currents, saltwater and sunlight.



Litter timeline

Degradation time varies greatly from 1–450 years depending on the properties of the litter.



Litter surveys

Litter surveys are not only important for clearing rubbish, but also for gathering data on the types of litter polluting our environment.



Litter surveys

We all need to do our bit to reduce litter in the environment. By rethinking how we shop and what we use in our daily lives, we can all make a difference.



📷 Marta Ortigosa



📷 Natasha Ewins

Litter surveys

Refusing unnecessary plastic and other materials, reducing the amount of products we consume, and repairing rather than replacing are all important actions we can take.