

# Endangered Species Day

Actual Holiday: Third Friday in May

First Celebrated: 2005

May



## Introduction

Endangered Species Day is a day to learn about animals and plants that are in danger of extinction. It's a day to learn what they are, why we need them, and how we can help them. Celebrate this day in your classroom by learning about and making posters to support some of the world's most vulnerable animals.

## Materials

- *Save the \_\_\_\_* activity sheet (page 31)
- art supplies
- pencils

## The Activity

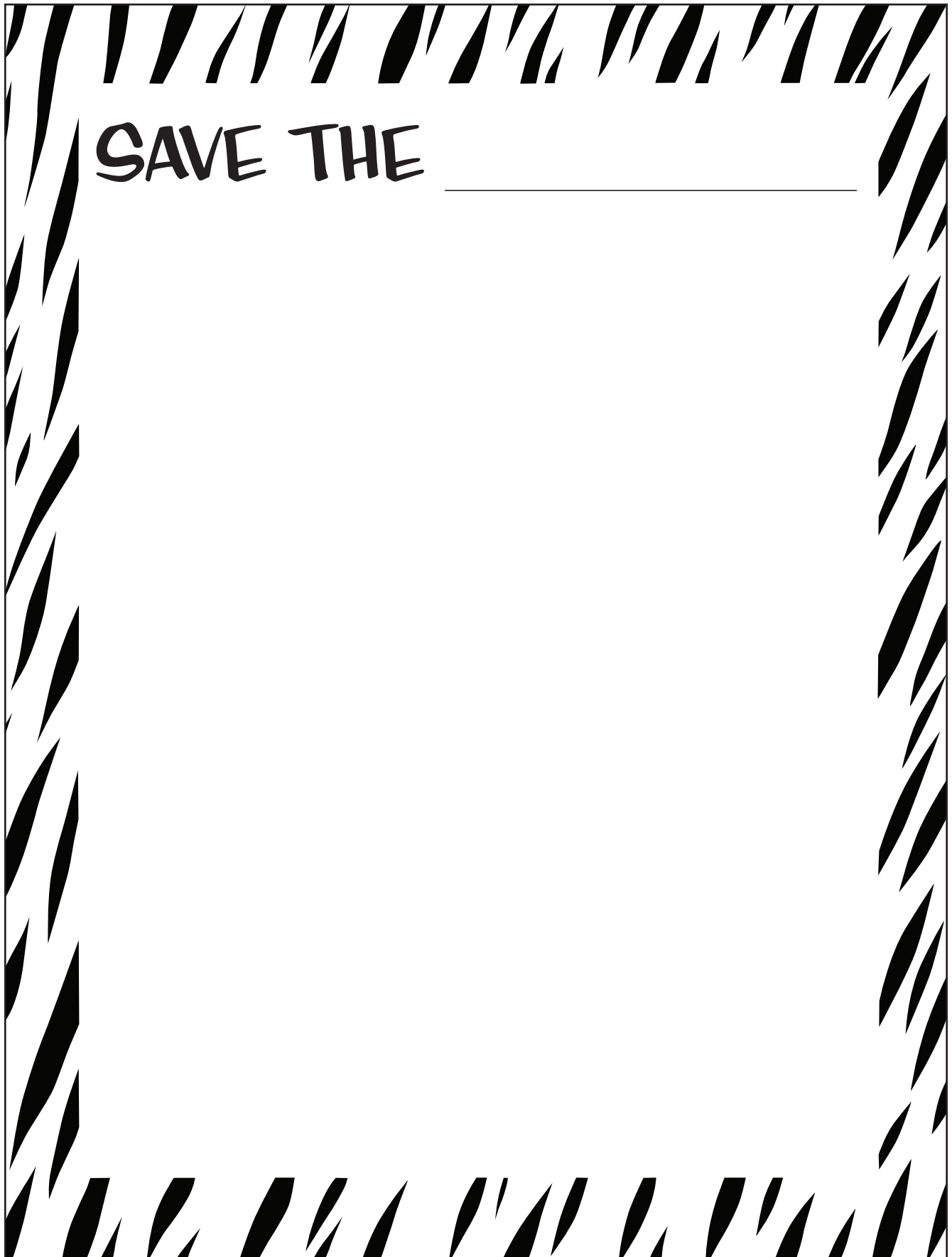
- Tell students that today they will be celebrating Endangered Species Day. This is a day to help people become aware of the dangers facing wildlife and try to help some of the more vulnerable species.
- Tell students about the following endangered animals:

- **Orangutans** are large primates with red fur. They live most of their lives in trees. They eat fruit and drink water that they find in holes in the trees. They even make nests in the trees so that they can sleep there. They help the forest they live in survive by dispersing seeds, which makes sure that new trees will grow. This keeps the forest alive for many other animals too. The destruction of their forest habitat and run-ins with humans means that there are fewer and fewer of these animals alive today.
- **Asian elephants** are the largest land mammals on the continent of Asia. Smaller than African elephants, these animals spend two-thirds of their day eating grasses and other plants. Their eating habits keep plants from becoming overgrown. The seeds they spread help grow new plants in new places, which helps other animals survive. They have become endangered due to habitat loss and poachers who hunt them for their tusks.
- **Cheetahs** live in African savannas and dry forests. They are known as the fastest land animal in the world. They can run in short bursts at speeds of almost 70 miles (115 km) per hour! They are important to the ecosystem because they keep their prey animals' population from becoming overgrown. And the fact that they often kill sick animals means that the sick animals can no longer spread their illness to the rest of the animal population. They are becoming endangered due to the loss of their habitat, causing them to search for food closer to humans. They are also often hunted illegally.
- **Sea turtles** were once found in all the world's oceans. They are born on land but quickly move into the water, where they spend most of their lives. They help maintain seagrass beds and coral reefs within the oceans and are a very important part of keeping the oceans healthy. They are endangered because of loss of habitat and because they are often hunted by humans. They are sometimes killed by becoming entangled in nets and fishing gear.

- Discuss with students the importance of keeping endangered species alive and their habitats intact. Have students think of one species of animal that they would create a poster to support. This could be an animal mentioned above or another animal they know is endangered.
- Distribute the *Save the \_\_\_\_* activity sheet to students, and have them begin designing their posters. Have them write the name of the animal and then draw a picture of the animal. Then have them write reasons for saving the animal and any slogans they might imagine. For example, they could write "Elephants help plants grow!" and "Tusks belong on elephants!" Have them make their posters as eye-catching as possible.
- Display the posters in the classroom or school, or have students take them home to display.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_



SAVE THE \_\_\_\_\_