This book was produced by Phillip Island Nature Parks through the generous financial support of ExxonMobil Australia.
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About Phillip Island Nature Parks

Phillip Island Nature Parks is a self-funded, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation of Phillip Island's wildlife and natural features.

The Nature Parks, established by the Victorian Government in 1996, manages approximately 20 per cent of Phillip Island. As a not-for-profit organisation, all revenue generated is invested into research, sustainability, ecotourism, environmental conservation and education.

The diversity of ecosystems within Phillip Island Nature Parks provides an ideal location for students of all ages to engage with amazing flora and fauna while learning about the importance of conservation. The education team at the Nature Parks consists of rangers who are passionate about education for sustainability and have a diverse background in teaching and interpretation.

About this Teaching and Learning Resource

The ‘Australian Fur Seals Early Childhood Teaching and Learning Resource’ aims to assist teachers in implementing an engaging unit of work focusing on Australian fur seals. This resource is divided into two sections: the ‘What Animal am I?’ picture storybook and this teaching and learning activity book. The program addresses key learning outcomes within the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and the National Curriculum.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

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Seal Memory

Using the ‘What Animal am I’ storybook students investigate features that help seals survive. Students also test their memory and recognition skills by looking at different seals that call our southern oceans home.

Background Information

Seal Rocks, located 1.5 kilometres off Phillip Island, is home to 30,000 Australian fur seals. Two other seal species call Australian waters home: the Australian sea lion and the New Zealand fur seal.

There are many other seal species that spend time in Australian waters, including subantarctic and Antarctic fur seals, southern elephant seals, leopard seals and occasionally crabeater seals and Weddell seals. These seals all have different features that help scientists tell them apart.

Activity

After reading the ‘What Animal am I’ storybook, discuss how scientists look at features to tell animals apart. For seals these traits include facial features, how they move on land, size, colour and body shape.

Create a seal memory game for students using the attached ‘Seal Memory’ sheet (two sheets for each game). Students take it in turns to flip two cards over at a time – if a student matches the picture they may turn over another two cards. The game finishes when all the cards are correctly matched.

Extension Activity

1. Using two of the seal memory cards, students label/name the:
   - Eyes
   - Nose
   - Flippers
   - Tail
   - Ears
   - Skin/fur

2. Students now draw a picture of themselves and label/name their:
   - Eyes
   - Nose
   - Hands
   - Feet
   - Ears
   - Hair

3. As a class, discuss the difference between our features and the features of a seal.

Resources

- Seal memory sheet x 2
- Scissors
- Pens and pencils
Activity

Seal Memory game

Instructions
Photocopy the game below twice for each group of players. Cut along the dotted lines to create memory cards. Students take it in turns to flip two cards over at a time – if a student matches the pictures they may turn over another two cards. The game finishes when all seal cards are correctly matched.

Australian fur seal
Crabeater seal
Leopard seal
Australian sea lion
Elephant seal
New Zealand fur seal

Australian Fur Seals
Activity

Magnificent Mobiles

In ‘Magnificent Mobiles’ students learn about the relationship between bull, cow and pup Australian fur seals. Students investigate their own family relationships by identifying their family members and close family friends.

Background Information

The Australian fur seal colony on Seal Rocks, off the western tip of Phillip Island, is an important nursery ground for pups. During the breeding season (November-December), females, called cows, can weigh up to 100kg and males, known as bulls, can weigh up to 350kg. Bulls spend much of the year fishing in distant waters. Bulls will compete for territories (areas of land) and only the biggest will succeed. During the breeding season a single bull may breed with as many as nine cows within his territory.

Cows give birth to one pup every year during the breeding season. Pups weigh approximately 7kg at birth. Cows make short fishing trips in between returning to the colony to feed their pups milk. After nine months the pup is old enough to fish for itself, becoming independent shortly after. Seal Rocks is an important breeding and socialising site for Australian fur seals.

Activity

Talk to students about what we call a male, female and young Australian fur seal (bull, cow and pup). Discuss the differences between the family structure of Australian fur seals compared with the student’s own family structure. Create a seal family mobile: 1 bull, 3 cows, 3 pups.

Extension Activity

With the above activity in mind, students draw or paint their own family and/or close friends. Teachers may wish to make comparisons between human families and a typical seal family.

Key Words

- Bull: male seal
- Cow: female seal
- Pup: young dependent seal

Resources

- Seal family template
- Scissors
- Pencils
- String/wool
- Hole punch
Activity

Magnificent Mobiles cut-out

Instructions
Students colour in and cut out the seals below. Punch holes and tie together with string to create a seal family mobile.
Activity

A Seal Meal

Students develop their numeracy skills by looking at the size of objects as well as the volume of fish eaten by seals. They will investigate how successful seals have been on their daily fishing trips as well as how much rubbish rangers collect from our beaches.

Background Information

Australian fur seals can dive 400 metres down to the ocean floor. They use their eyes and whiskers to search for prey. Fur seals are very active animals and must become skilled at catching fish and squid to keep up with their energy demands.

Australian fur seals may encounter many different types of rubbish during a busy day of fishing. Seals can entangle easily in this rubbish as they swim around. It is therefore important to pick up any rubbish to prevent it from making its way into our oceans.

Activity

Students complete the activity sheet ‘A Seal Meal’ to discover more about a seal’s diet.

Extension Activity

Select an animal from the ‘What Animal am I?’ storybook. Draw your chosen animal and as a class discuss what threats humans pose to your animal.

Ideas

- Kangaroos: Hit by cars, habitat loss (houses being built)
- Possums: Habitat loss (trees being cut down), poisoned by rat bait, killed by dogs
- Whales: Overfishing (loss of food), entanglements, hunting, marine debris
- Penguins: Overfishing, entanglements, marine debris, oil spills
- Turtles: Entanglements, hunting, eggs stolen/destroyed, marine debris

Resources

- ‘A Seal Meal’ worksheet (pages 8 - 9)
- ‘What Animal am I?’ storybook
Activity

A Seal Meal worksheet

Colour in the seal that has eaten the **most** fish.

Colour in the seal that has eaten the **least** fish.

Colour in the bucket that has the **most** rubbish in it.
Activity

Colour in the seal that could eat the **most** fish.

Colour in the bucket that could hold the **most** rubbish.

Colour in the bucket that could hold the **least** rubbish.
Activity

Saving Seals

Through song, sound and imagery, students learn about the many threats facing Australian fur seals and what they can do to help.

Background Information

Seals have many threats in their everyday life. A major threat is rubbish. Rubbish such as balloon string makes its way into our oceans when balloons are released into the air and eventually deflate. Seal pups love to play in the water and become easily tangled in stray balloon strings, plastics and fishing line, leading to serious injuries or even death.

Phillip Island Nature Parks is very fortunate to have seal researchers that are able to monitor our seals and release them from entanglement. Students can help by picking up rubbish they see and putting it in the bin.

Activity

The ‘Saving Seals’ song, to be sung with students to the tune of ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’.

Extension Activity

Circle all the things in the ‘Spare a Thought for a Seal’ picture that may pose a threat to seals over the course of their day.

Resources

‘Saving Seals’ song lyrics
‘Spare a Thought for a Seal’ picture
Saving Seals Song

Sing the ‘Saving Seals’ song to the tune of ‘Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star’.

Verse 1
Playful, playful little seal,
How I wonder how you feel.
Down in the ocean oh so deep,
Then up to the surface for time to sleep.
Playful, playful little seal,
How I wonder how you feel.

Verse 2
Playful, playful little seal,
How I wonder how you feel.
Down in the ocean catching fish,
With no rubbish you would wish.
Playful, playful little seal,
How I wonder how you feel.

Verse 3
Playful, playful little seal,
How I wonder how you feel.
Rubbish tangles up like glue,
So I put it in the bin for you.
Playful, playful little seal,
Now I know just how you feel.
Spare a Thought for a Seal worksheet

Help the seals by eliminating the threats. Circle all the things in the ‘Spare a Thought for a Seal’ picture that may pose a threat to seals over the course of their day.
Activity 5

Differing Diets

Students learn about the varied diets of some of south-eastern Australia’s weird and wonderful animals, including Australian fur seals.

Background Information

Phillip Island is home to a variety of native animals. They are able to survive in diverse environments by adjusting their diet and feeding habits according to their lifestyles and where they live.

An example can be seen in Australian fur seals who are excellent swimmers and spend large amounts of time in the ocean. Australian fur seals therefore have a diet which consists of fish and squid. Young seal pups rely on their mother’s milk for nourishment. Pups start learning to catch fish as they prepare for independence.

Activity

After reading the ‘What Animal am I?’ storybook, discuss with students the varied diets of the animals mentioned in the book. Using the ‘Differing Diets’ table, students match up the animals with the appropriate food by drawing a line between them.

Answers

- Possum: flowers
- Kangaroo: grass
- Mouse: nuts and seeds
- Whale: krill
- Seal: big fish
- Penguins: fish

Extension Activity

In this activity students imagine themselves as the animals in the ‘Differing Diets’ table. Using one animal at a time, instruct students to move about the classroom mimicking that particular animal as it interacts with others of its own kind while in search of food. For example, a possum as it scampers in search of flowers and nectar with a possum friend, or a kangaroo hopping about with the mob eating grass.

Resources

- The ‘Differing Diets’ table
- Pencil
- Area in which to move about
- Imagination
Activity

Differing Diets table

By drawing a line, students match each animal (on the left) with the food (on the right) that you would expect that animal to eat.
Activity 6

'What Animal am I?' colouring in sheet
This teaching and learning resource and accompanying 'What Animal am I' storybook were produced by Phillip Island Nature Parks through the generous financial support of ExxonMobil Australia.

For more information go to:
www.sealeducation.org.au
www.penguins.org.au
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