



## Carrying out a media watch on biodiversity

### Introduction

At the start of this topic, set students up to carry out a media watch on biodiversity issues. This could be in the form of an online Wiki or blog, or an electronic document that the students update. This is best carried out as a collaborative online exercise, as students can then add to each others' findings and make comments.

Media should include the newspaper websites, BBC, popular science journals such as New Scientist and organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace.

Students should be encouraged to set up RSS feeds from some relevant websites to their internet home pages, for example using iGoogle. In this way they will be alerted to any stories as they appear.

### The activity

Encourage students to seek out and comment on at least one local biodiversity issue or initiative during the media watch period. They should also comment on T.V. programmes, films or plays relevant to the theme.

- 1) Set up (or get the students to set up) an online blog or Wiki.
- 2) Ask students to contribute at least once a week with a referenced story and comment.
- 3) Students should be asked to evaluate the information according to its accuracy, bias and impact.

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### Introduction

You are going to carry out a media watch on biodiversity issues. You can record the stories and information that you find as an online Wiki or blog, or an electronic document that you continually update. A Wiki or blog format will allow other students to read and comment on your findings.

Media used should include the newspaper websites, BBC, popular science journals such as New Scientist and organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace.

You could set up an RSS feeds from some relevant websites to your internet home pages, for example using iGoogle. In this way you will be alerted to any stories as they appear.

- 1) Set up an online blog or Wiki.
- 2) Contribute to the Wiki/ blog at least once a week, with a referenced story and comment.
- 3) Evaluate the information according to its accuracy, bias and impact (see notes on evaluating media reports below).
- 4) Include (and comment on) at least one local biodiversity issue or initiative during your media watch period. You should also comment on T.V. programmes, films or plays relevant to the theme.
- 5) Make links from your friends' Wikis. Comment on at least one story from another student's resource.

### Evaluating media reports

The following questions will help focus your evaluation of articles and stories on biodiversity.

1. What conclusions are suggested by the headline or introduction?
2. What scientists and organisations were involved in the report? What is their reputation?
3. Who paid for the work/ writing/ investigation?
4. Where was the work carried out?
5. Where did the scientists report their research?
6. Are there explanations of any effects described? Is this just a correlation or does the evidence point to a mechanism?
7. What do other scientists say about the research? Are there other interpretations of the results?
8. What are the wider implications of the work? Will this vary depending on your point of view – is there potential for bias?
9. Would you be able to make a decision based these articles? How might you get more information?
10. Do the visuals and/or sound track enhance or detract from important information?