

How to care for wild animals and birds? Working with Wildlife Rescue Breeding Center in Stara Zagora

What

The main objectives of this project:

- To raise children`s awareness about the environmental problems and nature protection,
- To make students think about animal welfare as human responsibility,
- To learn more about the international and local welfare organizations, take part in some kind of charity work and more outdoor activities,
- To use cross-curricular teaching and learning in order to build knowledge and skills from different school subjects in a funny way,
- To learn more about the conservation of some rare species of birds and animals and their natural habitat with the help of Green Balkans educational events and school trips in the mountain, exploring some birds` natural habitat,
- To involve in the process community-based activities, working with parents, local institutions and animal welfare organizations, in order to help our students gain real life experiences, citizenship education and communication skills,
- To study more about Green Balkans` projects, taking care of healing and rehabilitation of rare bird species in distress and their return to the wild, as well as breeding the rare species of birds and strengthening the population of some rare birds, such as: Bearded vulture, Imperial eagle, Eurasian Black vulture, Saker falcon and Lesser kestrel,



- To use more actively the 21st century skills, developing the students` ICT literacy, creativity, problem-solving skills, building and promoting real and relevant learning experiences,
- To take part in various outdoor activities, /e. g. facing Tarzan`s Challenge Competition “From a bird`s Eye View”/
- To create a short video about Green Balkans and take part in a charity campaign that raise money and attracts volunteers for this Animal Welfare Organization and its specialized unit, The Wildlife Rehabilitation and Breeding Centre in our home town,
- To take part in the environmental youth programs and educational activities of Green Balkans Rescue Centre and other Animals Welfare Organizations as our partners for this long-term project.

How

- By using different school subjects` content. Cross-curricular teaching for this project involves topics from Science, Man and nature, Bulgarian, English, Physical Education, Citizenship, Arts, Music and school clubs,
- By using materials, created by the students through Flipped-classroom activities and project work, exhibitions of photos and paintings,
- By using video content and digital learning to motivate the students and booster their curiosity and motivation,
- By adopting some animals and birds in the Rescue centre,



- By organizing a school trip to the Karandilla mountain, part of the Blue Stones National park, exploring the natural habitat of some animals and birds. /Students take part in Tarzan`s challenge and competition, called “From a Bird`s Eye View”,
- By working in collaboration with our partners for this project, Green Balkans and the Wildlife Rescue Centre and their environmental youth programs.

Our home town is really proud of the fact that one of the most active units of this Animal Welfare Centre is located in Stara Zagora.

This organization was established in 1988, being Bulgarian oldest nature conservation NGO. For its more than 30 years existence, Green Balkans has won recognition from many international and national institutions, authorities and donors as a welcome partner and a highly reputable and competent organization with almost 6000 Bulgarian and foreign members and volunteers. Green Balkans has its specialized unit, concerned with the rehabilitation, treatment, recovery and release of rare wild animals or species, threatened with extinction. Its activities include breeding of rare species of birds of prey with long-term injuries that can`t be released back in nature, provision of shelter for confiscated rare animal species, subject to illegal trade and lots of environmental educational youth programs.

The Rescue centre has a clinic with specialized equipment, rehabilitation rooms, a quarantine room, different-sized aviaries for housing birds, able to fly with a total area of 6800 square metres.

One of the best Bulgarian Universities of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine is located in our home town and is a part of the well-known in Europe Trakia University.



Why

It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.” Eugene Ionesco

If we have made the children ask themselves the main question, HOW CAN I HELP?
half of the work is done and this is the best answer to the question WHY?

The greatest achievement of this project is that it raises the awareness of the environmental problems and makes the students think about animal welfare as human responsibility, as their own responsibility.

It motivates the children and helps them gain knowledge and skills through their own experiences, doing outdoor activities, helping the local animal welfare and having fun.

Through learning about the charity, nature protecting and animal welfare NGO and their fields of work students can apply and build on concepts, they have already learned, broaden their mind and look at the world from a different perspective.

This is a long-term project because of the great advantages of community-based learning, permanent support from parents and mutually beneficial partnership with Green Balkans Rescue Centre, Stara Zagora.



Project description

A. Topic and general aspects

This is a long-term cross-curricular environmental project which we develop in collaboration with Green Balkans, a local animal welfare NGO. It usually lasts for the whole school term and involves more and more groups of students.

B. Learners` profile

The topic of the project, practical experiences and activities are suitable for all our students, but we usually work in three age groups:

- Pre-school children /5-7 years old/
- 3rd- 4th graders /8-10 years old/
- 5th graders and school ecology club members /11-12 years old/

6th and 7th grade students can be volunteers for some particular environmental campaigns.

C. Duration

- Six classroom lessons at school with different age groups, /40 min. each/
- Six outdoor practical lessons, workshops and activities in the Green Balkans educational youth centre, /60 min. each/
- A weekend school trip for mixed groups of students, teachers and parents,

D. Cross-curricular teaching

Many school subjects are involved in this long-term project:



- Science and Nature Studies /Man and Nature/

During these lessons the students gain knowledge about the environmental problems, rare animals and birds threatened of extinction and their life and natural habitat.

There are also three ecology clubs in our school which upgrade and booster the students` knowledge and skills and provide excellent motivation and funny games and activities.

- English and Bulgarian

The topic about the wild animals and birds, environmental problems and animal welfare NGO implemented in the school curriculum and are part of pupils` English and Bulgarian lessons.

- Citizenship education is closely connected to the learning goals of this project because the children acquire knowledge and skills which benefit their real life experience. They take part in some charity campaigns and prepare video episodes to promote the Green Balkans Rescue centre activities and raise money for some of their causes. Students become aware of the importance of charity work and the environmental problems.
- ICT, Art and Crafts are also involved in students project work and Flipped-classroom activities. Using the 21st century skills the children get a lot of opportunities to improve their computer literacy, collect information from different sources, develop their creativity, critical thinking, communication and team work skills.
- Physical Education and sports events are some of our students` most favorite part of this project and they enjoy many outdoor activities.

During the school trip to the mountain they all take part in the sport games, Tarzan`s Challenge and “From a Bird`s Eye View” competitions.



E. The most Important advantage of this project work is it`s community-based and lots of parents take part in the activities, lessons, workshops and school trips.

We believe that topics like this raise children`s awareness about the environmental problems and realize that protecting the wild nature of our planet is human responsibility, our own responsibility.

F. Most of the practical outdoor activities are provided by the Green Balkans Rescue

Centre and their well-qualified instructors and lecturers. Each group choses to adopt either a bird or an animal, gets a certificate for this and helps the volunteers to look after them.

Teaching lesson: (description of one of the lessons)

The title of lesson: Charity Work. People, Animals and the Earth. Animal Welfare NGOs.
5th grade; Live Beat for Bulgaria, Pearson

Activity type: observation and discussion, presentation, reading, writing

Class organization: individual, pair and group work

Skills focus: reading, listening, speaking

Materials: Students` Book and Workbook, digital book, video episodes, Flash cards and photos, Flipped-classroom activities and students` presentations.

Description of the lessons and classroom activities:



- The students have to answer the questions: Do you know any Animal Welfare Organizations? Would you like to help out?
- The children observe a presentation about the most popular Animal Welfare NGOs, prepared by a group from the school ecology club. /Flipped-classroom activity/
- They read an article from their Students' Book, called: "Better Together. Let's Make the World a better place" and complete the table about the purpose and actions of a farming centre and an animal welfare NGO.
- In pairs, students prepare a short interview and answer on behalf of Neil and Ralica, the main characters of the article.
- Finding the main ideas they match the sub headings and paragraphs.
- Students work in pairs or groups and try to support one of the NGOs from the article. They explain WHAT they want to do and WHY?
- All the class watches a video episode about Green Balkans and some animals and birds in danger of extinction.
- The pupils join one of the three suggested groups, according to the topic, they are interested in, and get their task for the next week visit of Green Balkans Rescue Centre and their educational event.
- All the groups have to make posters about the programme: "Children learn how to protect wild animals and birds."

Outdoor learning: Practical activities at Green Balkans Rescue Centre and a school trip to the mountains.

- During the first school term the students visit the environmental educational youth centre and have two practical lessons. They learn more about the main fields of activity of the centre: healing and rehabilitation of rare animal species and their return to the wild, breeding of rare species of birds of prey with long term injuries, that can't be returned back to the wild, development of reintroduction programs and strengthening of population of some rare species, /Breaded vulture, Imperial eagle, Eurasian black vulture, Saker falcon and Lesser kestrel /, provision of shelter for confiscated rare animal species, subject to illegal trade.
- All of us take part in some practical activities and help the vets and volunteers in their everyday work.
- Feedback: The children do a Quiz about Animal Welfare to summarize all the activities they have done and prepare a Quiz for their classmates themselves.
- As a part of a school trip in the mountains, 5th grade students visit The Blue Stone National Park and the Karandila mountain.

Some of the parents usually take part in the school trip activities.

- They observe the natural habitat of some rare birds and animals and learn more about their life.
- All the students take part in Tarzan`s Challenge and Sports competitions “From a Bird`s Eye View”. Qualified instructors help them face the challenge and follow the safety rules.

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