

# Rescuing animals from environmental disasters

## ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- To be able to discuss and clearly explain ideas
- To recognise the importance of using a range of sources when forming an opinion
- To think critically about environmental disasters and climate change and their causes

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### England:

- PSHE
- History
- Citizenship

### Wales:

- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication

## ABOUT THE RSPCA

If you have not used any education resources from the RSPCA before, you may want to spend some time introducing the RSPCA and the work that we do. The supporting Sources Pack includes a slide to show your class.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is a charity operating in England and Wales that promotes animal welfare. Founded in 1824, it is the oldest and largest animal welfare organisation in the world. The RSPCA's vision is to live in a world where all animals are respected and treated with compassion. RSPCA Education offers a wealth of free online resources, including lesson plans linked to the English and Welsh curricula, interactive resources and a newsletter to keep you up to date with new content. For all of this and more, visit: [education.rspca.org.uk](http://education.rspca.org.uk).

## WHAT IS TABLE TALKING?

Table Talking is a communication and empathy building activity where pupils share their opinions and practice their critical thinking. It works best if pupils are sat around a table or using chairs in a circle. Pupils will read a 'Table Talking' prompt and take turns to share their thoughts for a few minutes using one of the following starters: **"I think..." "I agree because..." "I disagree because..."**

Encourage pupils to think critically about each other's ideas. Asking each other why they have the opinion they do is a great way to start.

Table Talking prompts are designed to start discussions and we have suggested different options depending on the age and ability of your class. Remind your pupils that there are many different opinions and that some of them might change theirs after the activity.



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## STIMULUS

Begin on page 18 of the Sources Pack.

The RSPCA helps animals in need of rescue. Every year we receive hundreds of thousands of calls reporting animals in need. We rescue animals from accidents and injury. Pets, wildlife and farm animals can all find themselves in need of a little assistance from time to time.

During environmental disasters, our teams become even busier across the country rescuing animals, assessing incidents, giving advice and responding to calls in emergency.

If you wish to explore the role of the RSPCA during environmental disaster in more detail before the activity, visit these links:

- [The RSPCA and their work during the floods of 1953](#)
- [Torrey Canyon oil spill: The day the sea turned black](#)
- [RSPCA Australia works hard to rescue animals from wildfire](#)
- [The RSPCA's international work](#)



## STIMULUS

Share images from **pages 19 – 23** of the supporting Sources Pack with the class. Use the questions below to discuss what they can see.

**KS1**

What can you see?

Can you think of an example of an environmental disaster?

**KS2**

Can you think of an example of an environmental disaster?

How could the RSPCA help these animals?

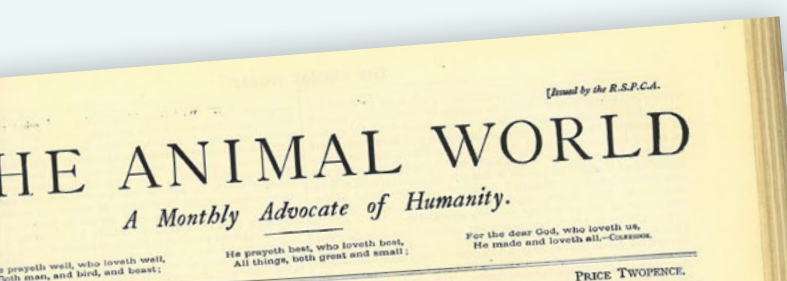
Thinking of one type of environmental disaster (oil spill, wildfire, flood, plastic pollution), which animals would be affected the most and how would they feel?

**KS3**

What are the causes of environmental disasters?

To what extent can we call them 'natural disasters'?

What challenges do you think the RSPCA would face when rescuing animals affected in disasters, when humans are impacted too?



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## TABLE TALK

Have pupils sit in circular groups of 3-5. Choose the prompt you think is most suitable for your groups and ask them to discuss.

Remind pupils that it's okay to have different opinions, but most importantly – it's best to keep an open-mind. This will develop their critical thinking and communication skills. Depending on needs, remind pupils of the importance of letting each other finish their ideas without interrupting. This will help them to start building their debating skills.

### KS1

Look at the image on page 19. What do you think has happened?

### KS2

Disasters from extreme weather are not caused by humans

Wild animals don't need help from environmental disasters

### KS3

Some animals deserve rescue more than others

Disasters from extreme weather are not caused by humans

Only the RSPCA is responsible for animals during environmental disasters

People need more help than animals in an environmental disaster

Allow a few minutes for discussion before inviting each group to share their ideas about the Table Talking prompt they discussed.

## TEACHER TALK

### KS1

Who do you think is affected by what is happening in the picture?

Can you think of words to describe how different animals might be feeling? What about for how the people are feeling?

### KS2

Who agreed and disagreed? Why?

Did anyone's opinion change during the discussion?

If anyone's opinion changed, how did that feel?

### KS3

Did anyone's opinion change during the discussion?

If anyone's opinion changed, how did that feel?

Was there anything you all agreed on?





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## TORREY CANYON OIL SPILL, 1967

Depending on the age and ability of your pupils, either show the images from the BBC article, read through the key points as a class, or allow students time to read through and explore the images themselves: **Torrey Canyon oil spill: The day the sea turned black.** Page 22 of the Sources Pack shows examples of birds affected by oil spills.



In 1967 the oil tanker SS Torrey Canyon hit rocks off the coast of Cornwall, leaking 100,000 tonnes of crude oil into the sea. Beaches were severely damaged, and thousands of sea birds were killed and injured in what remains the UK's worst environmental accident.

Choose from the questions below and record thoughts and new words in a word bank.

**KS1**

What is happening in the pictures?

How do you think the people and animals are feeling?

What clues from the pictures show you that they are old?

**Key vocabulary:** oil, help, environment, tanker, volunteer

**KS2**

What happened to the animals and their environment?

What did local people do to help?

Can you think of a short term and a long term impact?

**Key vocabulary:** compassion, volunteer, rescue, crisis, chemicals, pollution

**KS3**

What were the short and longer term impacts of the oil spill?

What was the response effort from local people and from the government?

Who do you think was responsible for the oil spill?

**Key vocabulary:** altruism, humane, marine life, biodiversity, sanitation, conservation



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## TORREY CANYON OIL SPILL, 1967

Once the group is familiar with the events surrounding the oil spill, challenge them to write a short piece imagining they are either a sea bird, such as a puffin or a razorbill, or a person living close to the beach in Cornwall, in the few days after the oil spill has happened.

For younger groups, you could provide sentence scaffolds for them to fill in the blanks and use their responses to the questions above to help. You could ask them to use a particular photo or sentence from the article for inspiration.

Older students could include more adventurous language, and if they have time, follow up with a description from the same person or animal a few years later. How have things changed? What was the long term impact and what did they learn? For inspiration, you could highlight the experience of Julian May, mentioned in the article, who was 11 at the time of the oil spill and is remembering the events many years later aged 61.





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## OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITY

### THE CHALLENGES OF RESCUE DURING DISASTER

#### KS1 and 2

Look through the images of the floods on **pages 19 and 20** of the Sources Pack and encourage students to think how people affected might have felt, and what the dangers were for the animals. Split the class into small groups and ask them to think about the challenges that the RSPCA or human disaster relief services would face during a flood. For younger groups, you could provide some words or sentences to choose from, such as:

- Trapped animals
- Houses and farms damaged or destroyed
- Injured people and animals
- Difficulty reaching animals and humans
- Need for special equipment and clothes
- Difficult to get food, shelter and warmth to people and animals
- People separated from their pets



#### KS3

Looking at the images and reading the report from the inspector on **page 21** of the Sources Pack, encourage students to think of how people affected might have felt, and the impact on different types of animals. Split your class into small groups and ask them to reflect on the challenges they might face if they were an officer working on rescuing animals at risk after a disaster. After a few minutes, ask students to share their ideas and collect responses on the board. Can anyone think of solutions to these challenges?

