

KS3 Geography. Africa - Conservation in Madagascar.

How deforestation is threatening animal habitats

STEVE BACKSHALL: This is Madagascar. It's a vast island in the Indian Ocean off the east coast of Africa. And it's home to some of the most unique and rare creatures on the planet. Incredibly 80% of the wildlife here exists nowhere else on earth. But it's a paradise under threat. I've sent eight ordinary kids from the UK to discover for themselves how the people and animals can both survive here together. This was never going to be easy.

CHILD NARRATOR: Lemurs can only be found in Madagascar. And on our mission one of the things we did was to track down some in the wild...with guides to help us find them in the jungle.

GUIDE: Be careful on the bridge - it's a bit wobbly.

CHILD NARRATOR: And sometimes it took hours just to find any sign of them.

CHILD: I'm really excited about seeing any kind of lemur.

CHILD NARRATOR: But in the end we were not disappointed.

CHILD: *[WITH LEMUR ON SHOULDERS]* It's like a parrot!

CHILD NARRATOR: One lemur we were really happy to see was the bamboo lemur.

GUIDE: So just up there - that's one of our animals - the greater bamboo lemur.

CHILDREN: That's pretty special! / Very privileged.

CHILD NARRATOR: But with rainforests in Madagascar being destroyed these animals have become one of the most critically endangered primates in the world. Seeing these guys up close made us want to find out what exactly was harming them.

CHILD: Why are lemurs so rare?

GUIDE: The habitat they live in is being encroached by human population. People are chopping this down for agricultural use, because human population is ever expanding. If the bamboo goes, they go.

CHILD: Yeah.

GUIDE: So it's pretty... It's pretty dire the things that are going on with lemurs in Madagascar.

CHILD NARRATOR: Knowing that only 500 of these bamboo lemurs are left in the entire world made us think it's reaching crisis point.

CHILD: It's kind of a battle between the lemurs and the humans and right now we don't really know who's going to win it.

CHILD NARRATOR: Surely the lemurs have to win. We should protect them at all costs.

CHILD: *[WATCHING A LEMUR]* Come here. You see the head?

CHILD NARRATOR: What do you think?

[QUESTION MARK]

CHILD NARRATOR: On our mission we got to hang out with lots of local people. We saw that life for them is very different to ours back home. We met up with Fabrice, who wanted to show us why chopping down and using trees is really important.

CHILD: Fabrice, what's your house made of?

FABRICE (TRANSLATED): Ravenala tree.

CHILD: Do you know how many ravenala trees it takes to build this room?

FABRICE (TRANSLATED): About 300.

CHILD: Wow!

CHILD NARRATOR: But housing isn't the only reason why trees are being cut down. We found out that they also have to be cleared to grow rice. Rice is grown in flooded fields called 'paddies'. It is the main food source for the 20 million people living in Madagascar.

[IN PADDY FIELD]

CHILD: How long does it take him to grow all of the rice?

GUIDE (TRANSLATED): Four months.

CHILD: How much rice do you get from a field this size?

GUIDE (TRANSLATED): He said his rice field starts from those mango trees to here... But only like 250kg of rice.

CHILD NARRATOR: And that's only just enough rice to feed his family. It's not enough to sell to make any money. *[WORKING IN THE FIELD]* We decided to have a go ourselves.

CHILD: Imagine how that boy has to do it every single day for like an hour on his own.

CHILD: We have to do so much for like not even that much food, and it's like more effort than what you get in return.

CHILD NARRATOR: Meeting people that have to use the land around them so they can eat and survive made us think that they have to cut down the trees.

CHILD: The problem is you can either save the rainforest and the lemurs or save the people. You have to make the right balance, cos they need all the trees. They need to cut it down and things so that they can grow their own food so that they can survive. But in doing so that endangers the forest and the lemurs.

CHILD NARRATOR: The people need to chop the forest so they can live. What do you think?