

# KS3 Geography. Africa - Conservation in Madagascar.

## Protecting endangered species in Madagascar

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: One of the things we learned on our mission is that sadly many animals in Madagascar might go extinct...even within our lifetime.

CHILD: I never thought that I would get...to be this close to one of the most endangered primates in the world.

CHILD NARRATOR: We met many dedicated people working hard to prevent such species from dying out. And the reality of preserving animals in the wild is not always guaranteed.

CONSERVATIONIST: Does everybody have their fingers crossed? All right, guys, last trap's empty.

CHILD NARRATOR: The fossa, in particular, is so rare we weren't able to track one down in the wild.

CHILD: The elusive has remained elusive.

CHILD NARRATOR: Instead, we went to a zoo where they had a rescued female and her baby.

CHILD: Mini fossa, baby fossa.

CHILD: Much, much smaller than I was expecting.

CHILD: Kind of looks like a cross between a cat and a dog, with like a stretched-out body and a lemur tail...basically!

CHILD: It's amazing to get this close to such a small...like a baby fossa... it's amazing!

CHILD NARRATOR:

Having young in captivity is a positive sign that they are doing well, which is a good thing as we discovered that wild fossa are now being pushed out of their territory by dogs.

*[GIRL GASPS AS SHE IS SHOWN VIDEO OF DOGS]*

CONSERVATIONIST:

The village dogs here will sometimes go in the forest and when they go in they completely displace the fossa from the area.

CHILD NARRATOR:

It would be difficult for these guys to live safely in the wild. To save these species, surely we should keep them safe in captivity? What do you think?

*[QUESTION MARK]*

CHILD NARRATOR:

But there is an alternative way to saving a species. Another incredible thing we got involved with was to get up close with some really endangered turtles.

CHILD:

Why is this species of turtle so endangered?

CONSERVATIONIST:

Well this is the only turtle that is found just in Madagascar, so it's the only one that is endemic to this area. When people are fishing, people will actually eat the turtles as well, because they need some protein.

CHILD NARRATOR:

At this conservation centre the turtles' future was not to be a life in captivity.

CHILD:

They're really cute and they are quite small.

CHILD NARRATOR:

They were part of a different solution. When baby turtles become big enough adults they are prepared to be released back into the wild.

CHILD:

*[TURTLE BEING HANDLED]* Oh! It peed!

CONSERVATIONIST:

*[MEASURING A TURTLE]* 24.4. 24.4 - great!

CHILD NARRATOR:

Our challenge was to travel five hours off-road to get to a remote lake that was an ideal spot for the turtles.

CHILD: This bag has some of the turtles that we tagged and microchipped and that yesterday, so I'm going to be very careful while carrying it cos...very, very precious goods in here.

CHILD NARRATOR: When we got to the lake we realised why it was the perfect place.

CHILD: Because it's their sacred lake, and we are entering it to release these turtles, so we are going to do it their way.

CHILD NARRATOR: Their way was to have a ceremony, which would ensure the protection of these turtles. *[LOCAL PEOPLE SPEAKING TO EACH OTHER]* This lake was so sacred to the local people it means they do not hunt or fish in it.

CHILD: The lake is ready for us to release the turtles into.

*[APPLAUSE AS A TURTLE IS RELEASED]*

CHILD NARRATOR: Releasing the turtles here was the only realistic way they could have a future in the wild.

CHILD: I think the turtles have definitely got a good home here cos all the people are like in unity with their lake, so the turtles are really well protected by the people.

CHILD NARRATOR: Surely releasing animals into protected areas like this is the best way to save a species? What do you think?