Teaching resources 2025/2026

PROTECTING OCEAN LIFE:

How sustainable fishing supports biodiversity?

#MoreFish

PROTECTING OCEAN LIFE

The ocean sustains life on Earth, yet its incredible biodiversity is under threat.

Unsustainable fishing can harm many species, including fish, seabirds, turtles, and even marine mammals. Sometimes non-target species are accidentally caught (called bycatch), habitats are damaged, or endangered species are used as bait.

Overfishing has disrupted food webs, reduced fish stocks and put marine life at risk.

5 STORIES OF IMPACT ACROSS THE GLOBE

Fisheries around the world are finding new ways to protect ocean life. By working together, scientists, NGOs, and fishers are sharing knowledge and creating solutions that help both people and marine animals.

The five stories below show how these efforts are making a real difference across the globe. Please click on the titles to watch the videos.

1. Teaming up to save turtles: click here

At Réunion Island, fishers and scientists work together to reduce sea turtle bycatch in the MSC certified swordfish longline fishery. Their efforts help 80% of accidentally caught turtles survive and be safely released.

2. Protecting porpoises with sound: click here

In the UK, the MSC certified Cornish hake gillnet fishery has cut harbour porpoise bycatch by 80% using “banana pingers.” These devices send sound signals that keep porpoises safe and away from fishing nets.

3. Saving birds with scarecrow streamers: click here

In MSC certified South Africa’s hake trawl fishery, brightly coloured “scarecrow” streamers have cut seabird bycatch by 90% and albatross deaths by 99%. These streamers stop birds from getting caught in fishing nets and keep them safe.

4.Saving and surveying silky sharks: click here

In the MSC certified Eastern Pacific Ocean tropical tuna fishery, trained crews with special gear have helped 91% of accidentally caught silky sharks survive. These measures reduce shark bycatch and make the ocean safer for this vulnerable species.

5. Feeding birds for their journey: click here

In Utah’s Great Salt Lake, the MSC certified brine shrimp fishery provides a reliable food source for over 10 million migratory birds each year. By protecting this ecosystem, the fishery helps birds fuel their long migrations safely.

LESSON PLAN: PROTECTING OCEAN LIFE

Subject: Geography / Science

Age: +14

Duration: 50 minutes

Learning objectives

- Understand why the ocean is important for life on Earth.
- Explore how fishing can impact ocean biodiversity.
- Learn about real-world solutions that reduce bycatch and protect marine species.
- Develop teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

You will need

- Printed or digital summaries of the 5 case studies: **Download biodiversity report here.**
- Short videos for each story
- Paper, pens, markers or digital tools for making mini-posters or slides
- Optional: projector or screen
- Key terms document: **Download here.**

ACTIVITY 1: Case study exploration (15 minutes)

1. Divide the class into 5 groups. Each group receives one story and will be asked to identify:

- What species are affected and what is the main environmental threat?
- What solution was implemented and who was involved?
- What were the results or impact of this solution?

2. Create a slide summarising the story and place it on a map if there is one in the classroom.

Activity 2: Creative Challenge (25 minutes)

Instructions:

- Ask each group to invent and develop one solution or innovation which could help to protect the species in their case study or reduce bycatch.
- Examples: new fishing gear, alert systems, awareness campaigns, habitat restoration.
- Present the idea in 2 minutes to the class.

Prompts:

- **Fishing methods:** Imagine a new fishing tool or practice that reduces bycatch and protects marine species.
- **Monitoring & management:** Design a system or rule to track impacts, help fishers make better decisions, or improve sustainable practices.
- **Collaboration & awareness:** Think of ways fishers, scientists, or communities could work together—or how people could help protect the ocean.
- **Certification & standards:** How can a sustainable fishing certification scheme like MSC help fishers reduce bycatch, protect the ocean environment and ensure fish stocks remain healthy?

Reflection and discussion (10 minutes)

- Which solution impressed you the most, and why?
- How do these stories show the importance of teamwork between fishers, scientists, businesses and communities?
- How does sustainable fishing help protect ocean biodiversity, and what can we learn from these examples?