

Topic based resource

Global Citizenship

Foundation Phase



Background information

Swallows are seen as an important sign of Spring in the UK and this is the same in South Africa. If the swallows die out here we will lose this, but so will the South Africans.

Bird migrations have been a source of mystery and for a long time it was believed that when some bird species disappeared in the winter they were hibernating in trees. It was only by ringing birds that their long journey was discovered. The reasons behind the long migration are still slightly mysterious but it is felt that the swallows fly south for the abundance of insects available. The 6000-mile journey has become more and more perilous though, as human activity has started to play more of a part. The birds now must avoid tall buildings, people who wish to trap them for food, a decreasing environment as land is developed, and oil rigs and lighthouses (the lights of which they are drawn to causing injury and death). This means that swallow numbers are dropping. It is important children realise that this is a global problem - each step of the journey has its own problem and each country they pass through has different dangers. If the swallows are lost due to hazards in one country, then they are lost to us all.



Climate perspective

Climate change is causing significant problems for swallows. The weather is becoming less predictable meaning that swallows are staying in the UK longer for the warmer autumn but then when they begin their journey they are caught out by cold spells over the Pyrenees, as the winter brings icy weather and unpredictable storms.

Climate change and over grazing is also affecting the Sahara Desert meaning that it is becoming wider and the journey across it longer. Since there is no food available to the swallows whilst flying across the Sahara they are starving to death before they can make it across. If climate change

continues at this rate it could be devastating to swallow numbers.

Swallow Migration Game

Foundation Phase

How far can you fly?

The aim of this activity is to show the difficulties swallows face during their migration. There are many dangers they will encounter as they cross different countries and cultures. The children will take different roles in the game with some being the swallows migrating and others representing the dangers, who will try to stop them.

Materials needed:



- Country pictures
- Distance card
- Swallow masks (if desired)
- Markers (could be cones or hoops)
- Swallow fact card
- A big space for running around

Step 1

Explain to the children that swallows live in the UK for half the year, and then they take an exceptionally long journey to live in South Africa for the other half of the year. They do this because warmer weather means there is more food available. Unfortunately, there are many hazards they will have to face on the way. Most of these hazards are caused by humans either by creating tall buildings or through climate change e.g. bad weather and the lengthening of the Sahara Desert which means longer distances without food. There are also some countries in Africa where they eat swallows.

Step 2



Using the country pictures, put the Cardiff picture at one end of the area and the South Africa picture at the other. Most of the children are going to be swallows flying from one place to the other. The rest are hazards who need to tag the swallows.

The hazards are:

- Bad weather – these children will need to blow like the wind
- Obstacles such as oil rigs and lighthouses or the Sahara Desert – these children stand in the way and try to tag the swallows as they come past.
- People who enjoy eating swallows – these children need to tag a swallow and then mime eating them with a knife and fork.

How many swallows managed to finish the journey?

Step 3

Do the children understand that if too many swallows die during their migration there will be fewer in the UK? Eventually we would lose them in all parts of the world so it is important that every country works together to save them.

Curriculum Links

Area of Learning and Experience – Humanities

What matters Statement -

Our natural world is diverse and dynamic, influenced by processes and human actions.

Area of Learning and Experience – Science and Technology

What matters Statement -

The world around us is full of living things which depend on each other for survival.

Next steps and other ideas

- Research the threats that swallows face further.
- Choose another a different bird that migrates and investigate their journeys.

Useful Websites

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/natures-home-magazine/birds-and-wildlife-articles/migration/>

<https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/articles/bird-migration-masterclass>







Swallow Migration Route

Journey		Distance	Danger
Wales (Cardiff)	Pyrenees (Céret)	680	Pesticides
Pyrenees (Céret)	Spain (Málaga)	551	Bad Weather
Spain (Málaga)	Morocco (Marrakesh)	1155	Lighthouses and Oil rigs
Morocco (Marrakesh)	Timbuktu (Mali)	2531	Sahara Desert
Timbuktu (Mali)	Abuja (Nigeria)	884	
Abuja (Nigeria)	Yaounde (Cameroon)	453	Caught for food
Yaounde (Cameroon)	Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo)	622	
Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo)	Windhoek (Namibia)	1323	Tall sand dunes
Windhoek (Namibia)	Cape of Good Hope	818	

Swallow Facts

Length: 17-19cm

Wingspan: 32-35cm

Weight: 16-25g

Diet: small flying insects caught on the wing



cadwch keep
gymru'n wales
daclus tidy

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