

Find your Flagship Species

Learn more about how the golden lion tamarin "flagship species" inspires conservation actions to benefit a whole region. Explore and learn about the local wildlife around you and create a mini campaign around your own local flagship species to inspire people to protect and appreciate nature in your own community!

Background

Think of endangered species you have heard about or seen on TV. What comes to mind? Animals like polar bears, sea turtles, and pandas often come to mind. These animals get a lot of attention because they are charismatic - people relate to them or find them interesting. However, what you may not think about is that working to protect and conserve these species actually benefits many other species and entire ecosystems. These are examples of "flagship species" or species that excite people about protecting animals, and by protecting them, we are really protecting much more. The golden lion tamarin (GLT for short) is a perfect example of such a flagship species (It's ADORABLE, right?). By working to protect GLTs conservationists are really working to protect and restore all the species that make up that lowland portion of Brazil's Atlantic Forest, one of the most endangered rainforests in the world and highest in species that, like the GLT, exist only in that tiny area.

Objectives

1. To define the role of a "flagship species"
2. To understand the connection between GLT conservation and the health of the lowland Atlantic Forest
3. To identify and appreciate potential local flagship species

Materials Needed

1. Notebook or sheet of paper
2. Pencil
3. Materials to create your "Flagship Species" campaign - depends on how you choose to do this (see step 4 below for suggested options)

Activity

1. Notice plants and animals around you:
 - a. Choose an area outdoors to observe - it could be any safe place (outside your home, such as a local park, garden, or school yard). Make a list of any animals, plants, or even insects that you recognize.
 - b. Research species that live in your town or county. You can search online or local guidebooks, or start with [this map from the Center for Biological Diversity](#), that lists endangered species in each county of the United States. Add these to your list of local species.
2. Discuss with your family, think about, and / or write in a journal:
 - a. Which species on your list do you think would get most people excited about nature in your area and why? (For example, are any of these species particularly cute, unique, colorful, or do they have any abilities / adaptations that are interesting?)
 - b. Which species do you think may be particularly important to other plants, animals and/or humans in the area?) (For example, are they pollinators? Are they potential food, or are they predators that limit the population of other animals? Do they provide shade, do they disperse plant seeds?, etc...)
3. Choose ONE species from your list as your local “flagship species”. This species is your ambassador to get other people - friends, family, and classmates - interested in learning about your local wildlife. An ideal species is one that you think people will LOVE and that provides real benefits to other species as well.
 - a. Consider doing further research on the benefits of your species... you might be surprised!
 - b. If you are working with members of your family, this is an interesting time to discuss and debate... What species best represents your community and why?
4. Create a poster to represent your local flagship species. Include photos or drawings and an explanation about why your species matters. This could be on paper or digital. You could also consider additional ways to present your message, including a slideshow or short video.
5. Get your message out! - Think about who you could inspire by sharing your flagship species campaign - friends, family members, social media, classmates and teachers. Your local library, zoo or other organization may also want to showcase your poster if you ask.

Connection back to Golden Lion Tamarins:

In choosing your own flagship species to represent your local community, you likely found that your species provides many benefits to others that you hadn't thought about! The golden lion tamarin is a flagship species in Brazil, inspiring interest in protecting local nature and wildlife and a symbol of pride. [Save the Golden Lion Tamarin](#), a U.S. based organization supporting the conservation of GLTs in the lowland Atlantic Forest of Southeastern Brazil explains that “if we lose GLTs it will be because we have lost their forest.” The work to restore the lowland Atlantic Forest for GLTs, also protects many other species that may get less attention, but are found nowhere else in the world. Once they are gone, they are gone forever!

Fifty-two percent of Atlantic Forest trees, 92% of amphibians, 18 species of primates (See Conservation International's *Pocket Guide to Monkeys of the Atlantic Forest of Eastern Brazil* [[download](#)]), and at least 158 species of birds are found nowhere else in the world. Saving the golden lion tamarin also directly benefits the people in the region. Associação Mico-Leão-Dourado - AMLD (Golden Lion Tamarin Association), the organization protecting Brazil's GLTs, is part of the Atlantic Forest Restoration PACT, a large collaborative effort to restore 15 million hectares (5,800 sq miles) of Atlantic Forest by 2050 <https://www.pactomataatlantica.org.br/the-atlantic-forest>. To accomplish this, a lot of native tree seedlings are needed. AMLD has helped 7 local families to create tree nurseries that are now increasing the families' livelihood through the sale of native tree seedlings to AMLD and other Atlantic Forest restoration efforts.

Want to get involved and help!?:

1. Share your art and writing with others to raise awareness and support. Also consider sharing your local flagship species project with your local zoo or community organization.
2. Consider donating (and encouraging others to donate) to Save the Golden Lion Tamarin www.savetheliontamarin.org, a US public charity that supports the AMLD's efforts to save GLTs in their native Atlantic Forest in Brazil.