

Climate Unity Virtual Conference 25th September 2024

Are elephants afraid of mice?

Farmers near the national parks in Zambia constantly worry that their crops will be eaten by elephants. There are few fences, and it is hard to stop an elephant anyway. Elephants eat for twenty hours a day and don't recognise farms or the crops that the farmers grow.

This activity is design to help your children understand that living side by side with elephants is not straightforward and conservationists often deal with angry farmers whose crops have been destroyed.

The children will listen to a short presentation covering the questions below and then design their own 3D model with gadgets that might keep the elephants away from the farmer's fields and stop the elephants from being killed.

The children will consider: -

- Why are the elephants eating the farmers crops?
- How does the farmer feel about the elephant?
- What can happen to elephants that raid farmer's fields?
- How do we stop elephants from getting into the farmers field?
- What have researchers found out about elephants that will help with the solution?

Preparation

Before the session, the following resources need to be prepared or collected.

- A sheet of card for each pupil (ideally A4, quite stiff, e.g. side of an Amazon box or cereal packet)
- Copy of the Farmer's crop sheet for each pupil (attached)
- Large collection of waste materials e.g. card, paper, lollipop sticks, boxes (we normally do not use plastic containers).
- Some black and yellow tissue paper to make bees
- Red paper for chillis and anything else you think might be useful.
- Paper drinking straws for fences are cheap and very useful.
- Glue, tape and scissors.

The children stick their maize on to their A4 card field and then construct their solution to stop the animals getting into the field. There are some rules:

1. The design must cover the whole field.
2. The farmer needs a way of getting in and out of the field.
3. Elephants are sneaky and very clever. Simple fences won't do!
4. The children will have up to 30 minutes and can use anything on the table.
5. They will need to explain why their model will stop the elephants getting into the field.
6. There is no right answer.

The Art of Survival: FIGHT • PROTECT • ENGAGE

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Founder: David Shepherd CBE FRSA 1931 – 2017

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Registered office: One Bartholomew Close, London, EC1A 7BL | VAT Reg No. 414001815

Information about elephants for teachers. You can drop some hints, if some children are struggling.

Hint	How it could be used to stop the elephant.
Elephants can't jump	A big ditch round the field might work
They are strong and can easily push over trees (and fences)	Big fences are too expensive for most farmers to build.
They hate things buzzing around them	Bee hives that will rock and release the bees and honey is also another source of income for the farmers.
They don't like small moving things on the ground	Probably snakes or mice. This is not that helpful on real farms.
Or loud noises	Hanging noisy items from a rope around the field that moves when an elephant pushes against it.
Or bright colours	Flashing lights at night – although suggestions do need to be low cost and items that can be readily available.
Or strong smells	Researchers have found chilli is a deterrent, either plants being grown around the crops, chilli powder on fences, or burning homemade brickettes with chilli in them, causing a chilli smoke.

Also note:

With populations growing, elephants are finding villages and farms in areas where they normally travel. Finding crops growing in these spaces is just another source of food. There are still a lot of deaths from human-elephant conflict. Elephants are clever enough to overcome obstacle after a few months, therefore variety is necessary.

Format of the workshop

10 minute - introduction to the topic and task

30 minute – activity time

During which the presenter will stay online for any questions or discussion and will also share some footage from Zambia

5 minutes – summary

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Here are two examples of solutions children have come up with before:



David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF) Workshop

Since 2004 DSWF has been supporting children and young people in the UK, Africa, and Asia to advocate for biodiversity and wildlife conservation. For over 50 years, David Shepherd dedicated his life to protecting some of the world's most iconic and endangered animals. Just as David began in 1984, DSWF continues to work tirelessly to fight wildlife crime, protect endangered species and engage with local communities.

Our compelling stories, images and films about wildlife, biodiversity and conservation come directly from the nineteen projects we fund across Africa and Asia.

The eight species we support are elephants, tigers, lions, snow leopards, rhinos, wild dogs, chimpanzees and the intriguing pangolin. Children and young people are immediately captivated by the animals and stories from local communities that live alongside endangered animals day-to-day. Our dedicated team of primary and secondary specialists have over 25 years' experience of teaching in schools and colleges.

Our free talks and workshops are aimed at children and young people aged 6-19 to inspire the next generation of global wildlife champions.

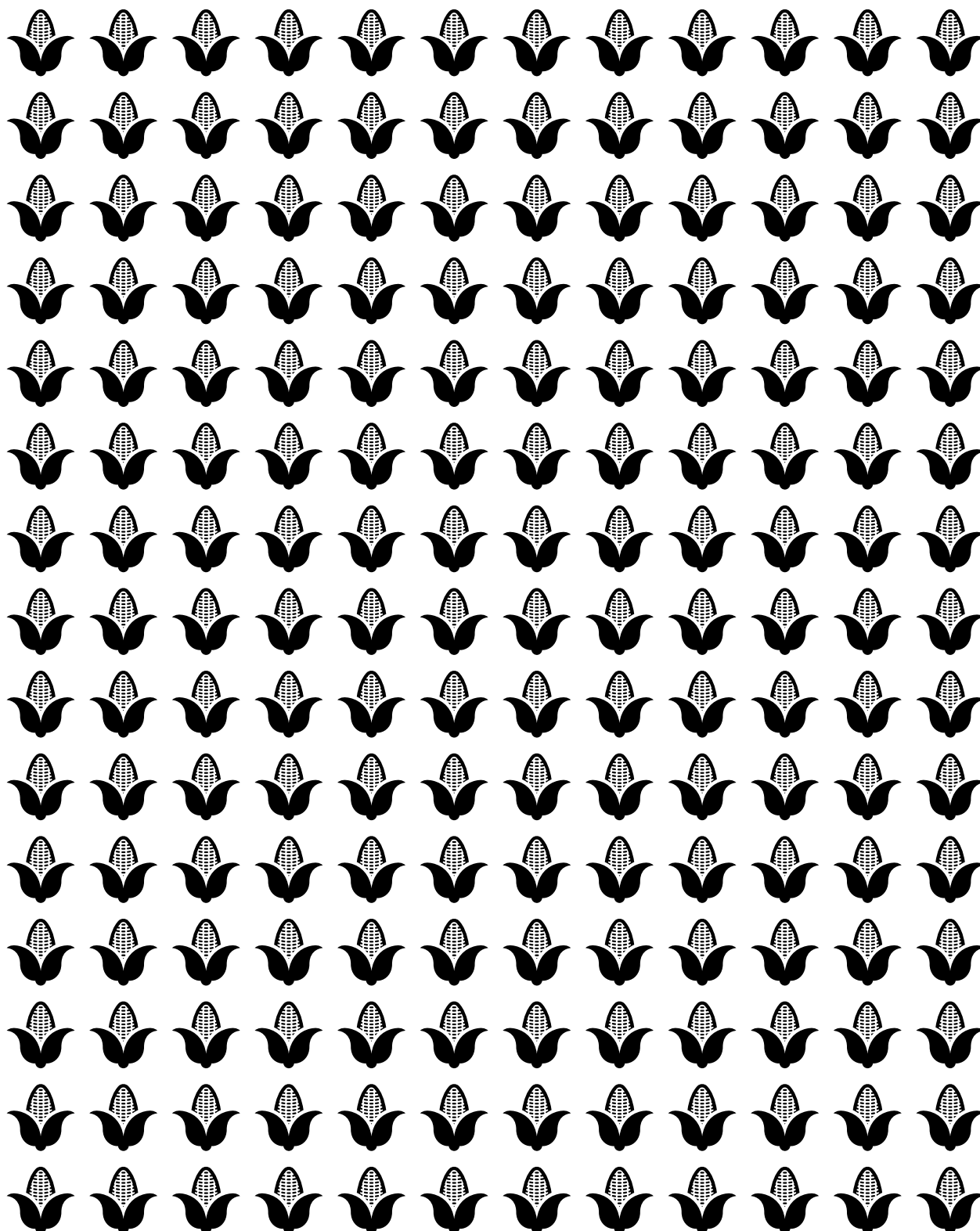
You can book a session here: <https://davidsshepherd.org/education/>

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