People and the environment

Almost everywhere you look there are people. People travel all over the world. These days it is difficult to find anywhere that people have not already visited.

Changing environments

How do people change their environment?

Ever since people began to live on Earth, they have changed their environment. In the early days there were so few people and so much space for them that they made little difference to their environment.

Nowadays, there is hardly anywhere on Earth that people have not affected.

Today, massive areas of land are cleared to grow food and to build new homes, shops, factories and roads. People harm their environment with noise and litter.

People dig mines and quarries to get building stone, minerals and fuels. This limestone quarry is in France. Valuable soil is destroyed and the appearance of the countryside is spoiled.
**Endangered species**

Although there are many kinds of animals and plants in the world today, some have died out. We say they have become **extinct**. Many others are rare, which means that only a few are left. We say they are **endangered**. Some common plants and animals have also become endangered because:

- they have been poisoned by chemicals from farms and factories
- they have been hunted for their meat, fur, skin or horns
- they lost their homes when people cleared land or filled in ponds for building.

The tiger is endangered because of hunting and because people are destroying the forests where tigers live.

### Activities

1. Work with a friend. Discuss what effect (good or bad) each of these jobs has on the environment:
   
   | lorry driver | gardener |
   | bus driver   | farmer   |
   | fisherman    | airline pilot |
   | shopkeeper   | miner |
   | refuse collector | traffic warden |

2. Set up a computer spreadsheet of endangered wildlife. Use these headings: ‘Animal or plant’, ‘Habitat’, ‘Numbers’ (if known) and ‘Threat’. Use reference books and the Internet to help you complete the spreadsheet.

3. Work in a group. Draw up a plan to improve your school grounds for wildlife. Use your own ideas and use reference books as well.
   
   a. What special equipment would you need?
   
   b. Who would look after the plants and animals during the school holidays?