The Giant Animals of the Guyana Shield
Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** K–8  **Curriculum Focus:** Mammals  **Lesson Duration:** Three class periods

**Student Objectives**
- Learn about the unique animals of Guyana.
- Write an imaginative story, with illustrations, about these animals.
- Share students’ stories with the class.

**Materials**
- Discovery School video on unitedstreaming: The Jeff Corwin Experience: Guyana: Rain Forest Ecosystem
  Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

  Selected clips that support this lesson plan:
  - The Giant River Turtle
  - Buff Marine Toad
  - Giant River Otters

- Computer(s) with Internet access
- Paper and pencils

**Procedures**
1. Begin the lesson by showing students where Guyana is on a world map. You can find a map online at [http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/samerica/samerica/guy.htm](http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/samerica/samerica/guy.htm). Point out that Guyana is on the northeast coast of South America and is about the size of Idaho.

2. Tell students that Guyana has the largest undisturbed rain forest in the world. It is called the Guyana Shield. Animals seem to come in large sizes here; there is a giant river turtle, a giant toad, and giant river otters. Explain to students that because the rain forest is undisturbed and habitat has not been lost, animals grow to large sizes.

3. Show students segments 1 and 2 of The Jeff Corwin Experience: Guyana: Rain Forest Ecosystem. Point out the animals you’ve been discussing.
4. Tell students that Guyana is such a unique place, with so many unusual animals, that it makes an excellent backdrop to a creative story. Then have students think of an imaginative story involving at least one animal of the Guyana Shield. Tell students to let their imaginations go wild and come up with something funny, scary, or silly.

5. Give students time in class to work on their stories. After they have finished writing, suggest that they draw a picture to go with their stories.

6. During the next class period, ask for volunteers to read their stories. Encourage students to participate and share their work. Then collect the stories and pictures and display them around the classroom for everyone to see and admire.

**Assessment**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students’ work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students were highly engaged in class discussions; wrote a highly creative story about the animals of Guyana; and drew an interesting picture to accompany their story.
- **2 points:** Students participated in class discussions; produced a satisfactory story, and drew an adequate picture to accompany their story.
- **1 point:** Students participated minimally in class discussions; did not complete their story; and did not complete their picture accompanying the story.

**Vocabulary**

*Bufo marinus toad*

**Definition:** The largest toad in the world; in Guyana, this toad can weigh as much as 2 pounds.

**Context:** Guyana’s *Bufo marinus* toad is large enough to eat a mouse opossum or a bird in two gulps.

*Guyana*

**Definition:** A tropical country on the northeast coast of South America that is about the size of Idaho

**Context:** Much of Guyana is difficult to reach and has never been explored.

*Guyana Shield*

**Definition:** The largest undisturbed rain forest in the world

**Context:** Because the Guyana Shield has not been settled by humans, plants and animals can grow and thrive there.

*river otter*

**Definition:** An animal living in the rivers of Guyana; this species can weigh as much as 70 pounds.

**Context:** Jeff Corwin met up with Dianne McTurk, who has raised river otters and then released them back into the wild.
**River Tortoise**

*Definition:* A large species of turtle that lives in fresh water.

*Context:* The river tortoise and its nests often are hunted; Guyana is one of the last places in South America where they can still be found.

**Academic Standards**

**National Academy of Sciences**


- Grades K-4
  - Life Science: Organisms and environments

- Grades 5-8
  - Life Science: Populations and ecosystems, Diversity and adaptations of organisms

**Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL’s Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit [http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp](http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp).

- Language Arts—Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Writing: Gathers and uses information for research purposes

**Support Materials**

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the DiscoverySchool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit [http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html](http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html)