

## Colchester Zoo

On Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June, 10R and 10W went to Colchester Zoo as part of our learning of Ecology. We made our way to the zoo at roughly 8.30 a.m. and arrived there at around 9.45 a.m. Our first task was to look for some of the endangered animals that were kept at the zoo. One particularly memorable animal was the orangutan. Orangutans are extremely endangered in the wild. The main reason is that their rainforest home is being cut down to make way for palm oil plantations, which is a very useful product used in many commercial items. This is causing severe habitat loss, which is causing the dramatic depletion in orangutan numbers.

The Amur leopard is also a critically endangered animal,



with an estimated 35 individuals left in the wild. While studying some of these animals, my group decided to take the 'train' which was giving a tour of the zoo. We got to see the lemurs, which were roaming free, and we were able to stroke them. The red panda was incredibly adorable and the same could be said about the sun bears, who are the smallest of the eight bear species. It was fascinating to walk around and learn new things about animals, such as the fact that armadillos are nocturnal. A lot of students also took the opportunity to feed both the elephants and the giraffes in the 'Africa' section of the zoo.

We were then given a talk, which focused on a variety of issues surrounding endangered species, what people can do to help species from going extinct and how to make these animals' environments safe habitats.

## Colchester Zoo (cont'd)



Many animals are endangered and threatened with extinction. In the session, we learnt about the major threats facing endangered animals: habitat loss, overuse, pollution, and invasive species and poaching. This can be a real problem, as if one species is removed it can affect the whole community of animals; this is called interdependence. As the talk was based around endangered species and some of the reasons as to why they are endangered, we were given the chance to see real animal artefacts up close, such as elephant tusks and real animal fur coats that had been confiscated from poachers and people looking to sell them by the police. It was very enlightening to learn some of the shocking facts about endangered species, such as the fact that coral reef is one of the most important parts to the functioning of marine habitat and how it is slowly deteriorating.

It was a fascinating talk, yet it was also quite saddening. The session was ended with positive actions we could take to help endangered



animals, with a specific focus on what the zoo has done to help breed the animals and ensure their species don't die out. The talk was very informative in regards to captivity and the stigma surrounding it as they explained how slow the process was of getting animals from captivity back into the wild. It was also interesting to learn about sustainable use of palm oil by companies and how to look for seals that affirm sustainable use of their products.

**Noor & Bushra, Year 10**