

# The post-nuclear animal kingdom \*\*\*

*The road to recovery*

50 minutes  
individual and group work

## Introduction

Almost 30 years after a horrific accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant released massive amounts of radiation and became one of the world's worst nuclear catastrophes, the long-abandoned site has some new inhabitants: new research finds that many native wildlife species are once again finding refuge in the human-free Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in Ukraine. In the context of this, think of what it means for different life forms to rebound and how they may have been affected by immediate and long-term radioactive contamination. After watching a video and reading an article about this, your final task is to write a synopsis of what you learned and perhaps already knew.



## Exploration

### A

1. Read the article about wildlife returning to the Chernobyl area:  
<https://www.livescience.com/52458-wildlife-populations-chernobyl-disaster.html>
2. Going by the article, what questions still remain unanswered?
3. Come up with at least three questions of your own you'd like to see answered.

### B

1. Watch the video about wildlife returning to the Chernobyl area:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khv87k68kIs>
2. What do you glean from the video about how much the natural habitat for animals is still impacted by the 1986 nuclear disaster?

## Final task

1. Because you care about a healthy environment for all lifeforms, you have become actively involved with the organisation Friends of the Earth International (FoEI).
  - To inform the general public, you are asked to write a short report about some of the short- and long-term consequences of nuclear disasters on people, animal life, and plant life. Use what you learned about Chernobyl as an example. Express the concern that we don't know enough yet about the impact of radioactive radiation on any and all lifeforms and that more research is needed.
  - List at least five animal species that we have come to depend on for food and whose potential DNA mutations should be researched to learn more about radioactive contamination.
  - List a minimum of five animal species that don't necessarily depend on humans for survival and that might thrive (with or without DNA mutations) in a post-nuclear disaster environment. Draw from what you learned from the article and video listed in this web task.

- Mention the notion that, despite humans are at the top of the food chain, they might not make as successful a return as some other lifeforms.
  - Length: 350-400 words.
2. Share your final product with a classmate, small group, or the whole class, as assigned by your teacher.
  3. What is the most important lesson that you learned, both from your own work as well as that of others in your class?
  4. Do you think you have to be an environmentalist to be against nuclear power plants? Explain.