

Animals in Danger!



¹ What do the following animals have in common? Pandas, rhinoceros, Mexican burrowing snakes, loggerhead turtles, Californian condors, pink pigeons, small tooth sawfish, and Siberian sturgeons.

² They are all endangered animals!

³ Animals become endangered for a variety of reasons. Sadly, humans are behind every one of them! Here are the four reasons that many animals are in jeopardy:



- Excessive hunting: For centuries, humans have hunted elephants for their impressive tusks, killed tigers for their beautiful furs, and scooped up sturgeons to make caviar. While we still have elephants, tigers, and sturgeons in the wild, we cannot say the same about many others that have simply become extinct!
- Foreign species: Year 1505 was a dreadful turning point in the natural history of the island of Mauritius - European sailors discovered this beautiful island in the Indian Ocean and brought dogs, pigs, monkeys, and unintentionally, rats with them. The arrival of humans and those introduced animal species were bad news for dodo birds. About 50 pounds and flightless, dodo birds did not have any natural enemies until then. They picked fruits fallen from trees and built their nests on the ground. Shortly after humans set foot on Mauritius, however, dodo birds realized that they were in big trouble - men killed them for their meat, and those introduced animal species destroyed their nests and ate their eggs. The compounded effects of excessive hunting and foreign species drove dodo birds to first become rare and then extinct. The last dodo bird was killed in 1681.
- Loss of habitats: Humans and animals have always competed for land and other natural resources. We clear an area of a forest for farming. We cut down trees and use lumbers to build beautiful houses. We construct dams and have reservoirs to ensure that we have enough water to use. At the same time that we are trying to make our life comfortable, we inadvertently destroy the habitats of wild animals.
- Pollution: More than once we have seen on televisions that rescue workers are trying frantically to save seabirds soaked in spilled crude oil. More than once we have heard about how emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases have raised the Earth temperature and caused global warming. Pollution has a long lasting, and usually irreversible, effect. If we choose to do nothing and continue to pollute our planet Earth, our next generations will have to bear the consequences of abnormal weather and polluted environment.

⁴ We often take things for granted. For example, when we go to a seafood restaurant, we expect to see Atlantic cods on the menu. But, did you know that Atlantic cods have been over harvested and may become endangered one day? "Nah, that's an exaggeration," you may say. Well, you may think differently if you knew what had happened to the passenger pigeon of North America.

⁵ In the early 1800s, the passenger pigeon was the most numerous bird species in the world. Believe it or not, there were more passenger pigeons than all other birds inhabiting North America combined. Then, settlers came to North America and loved the taste of passenger pigeons. They started to hunt passenger pigeons commercially and uncontrollably - just over the course of a year in the 1850s, one billion passenger birds were killed in Michigan! As you may have guessed, passenger pigeons and dodo birds shared the same fate. The last passenger pigeon died at the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. Now, do you still think Atlantic cods and many other familiar animals may not be endangered if we do not appreciate the need and urgency for conservation?

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Name _____



Date _____

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<p>1. Which of the following animals is endangered?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Dodo bird</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Groundhog</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Panda</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Atlantic cod</p>	<p>2. Which of the following animals is extinct?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Siberian sturgeon</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Bald eagle</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Great white shark</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Passenger pigeon</p>
<p>3. The last dodo bird died at the Cincinnati Zoo in 1681.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A True</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B False</p>	<p>4. Passenger pigeons became extinct because of excessive hunting.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A True</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B False</p>
<p>5. How did dodo birds become extinct? (Please choose the two best answers.)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Pollution</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Excessive hunting</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Loss of habitats</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Introduced animal species</p>	<p>6. Which of the following is not a reason for animals to become endangered or extinct?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Pollution</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Excessive hunting</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Conservation</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Loss of habitats</p>
<p>7. Both oxygen and carbon dioxide have caused the temperature on Earth to rise.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A True</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B False</p>	

Animals in Danger! - Answer Key

- 1** C Panda
- 2** D Passenger pigeon
- 3** B False
- 4** A True
- 5** B,D
- 6** C Conservation
- 7** B False