

2 Threats to species

Wildlife Worries

What will the world be like in 50 years?

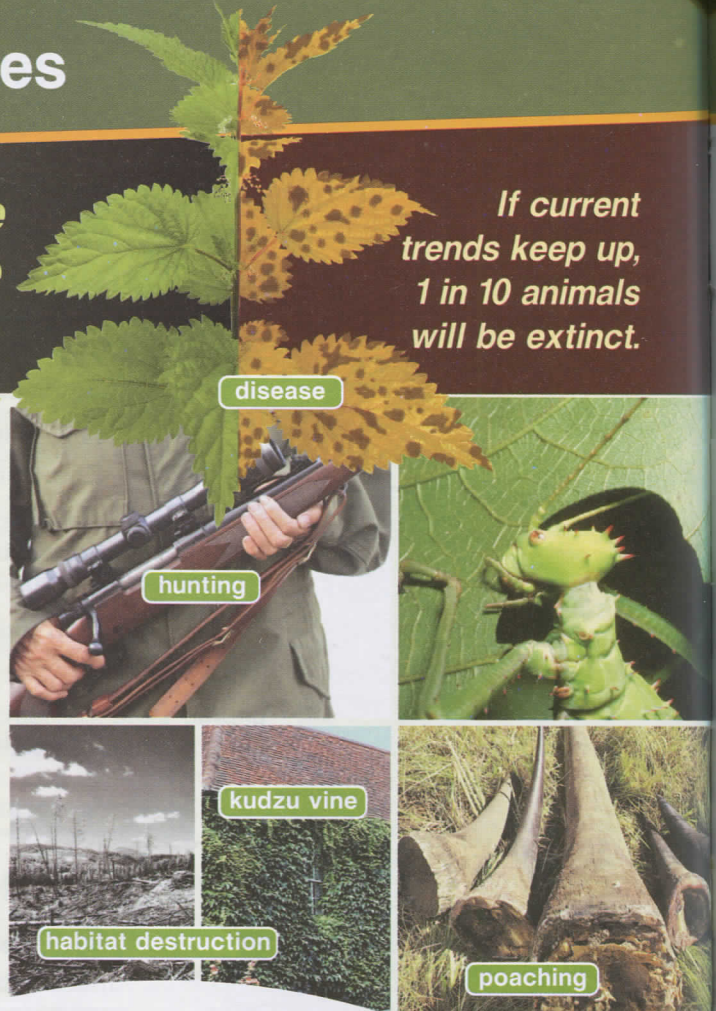
If current trends keep up, 1 in 10 animals will be extinct.

Habitat destruction is the biggest **threat** to wildlife. "The human population is growing," says Walter Jenkins of the Wildlife Protection Society. "So we need more space. Agriculture, logging, and land development projects are taking over ecosystems. At best, this results in **habitat fragmentation**. At worst, habitats disappear."

Hunting and **poaching** are two more problems. Jenkins believes this is because there isn't enough food for everyone. "People must eat. Sometimes, that means going out and killing your food – whether or not it's legal," Jenkins suggests.

Jenkins points to primates as an example of **overexploitation**. In Africa, restaurants serve gorilla meat. People also hunt the animals for their skins, which can fetch a high price. "And some do it just for fun," claims Jenkins.

Nonnative species also hurt plant and animal populations. When new species are **introduced**, some bring foreign **diseases**. This can result in **epidemics**. **Invasive species** like the **kudzu vine** and **snakehead fish** have caused problems; in the U.S. kudzu has destroyed millions of acres of plants. The snakehead eats other fish and even small mammals. It also has a high reproductive rate. Species like these are huge threats to other plants and animals.



Get ready!

1 Before you read the passage, talk about these questions.

- 1 What are some threats to plant and animal species in the world?
- 2 What is one invasive species that is a threat to the environment in the U.S.?

Reading

2 Read the magazine article. Then, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 1 ___ Wildlife populations are declining because humans need more space and food.
- 2 ___ Gorillas are being overexploited for their meat and skins.
- 3 ___ The snakehead fish is destroying native plant life in North America.

Vocabulary

3 Read the sentence pairs. Choose which sentence uses the underlined word correctly.

- 1 A Fish populations are declining because of overexploitation by fishermen.
B The Javan rhinoceros has been introduced almost to the point of extinction.
- 2 A The snakehead fish can kill trees by blocking them from sunlight.
B Invasive species are usually brought into an environment by humans.
- 3 A During an epidemic, illness usually affects a small community.
B Most zoo animals are nonnative. They come from all over the world.
- 4 A Habitat destruction can result from mining, logging, or agriculture.
B Conservation is one threat to many plant and animal species.
- 5 A Humans can't catch many of the diseases that affect animals.
B In poaching, people catch animals, but set them free afterward.

- 4** Fill in the blanks with the correct words and phrases: *threat, epidemic, hunting, poaching, introduce, kudzu vine, snakehead fish, habitat fragmentation.*

- 1 The _____ has been found in some U.S. ponds and rivers.
- 2 _____ is allowed in this area, but some animals are protected.
- 3 _____ results in a large area being divided into smaller ones.
- 4 Millions of people were affected by a(n) _____ in the 1300s.
- 5 _____ is still a problem, although it is illegal.
- 6 Pollution of rivers and oceans is a(n) _____ to aquatic wildlife.
- 7 When people _____ new species to an area, they endanger native species.
- 8 The _____ is a plant that is originally from Japan and China

- 5** Listen and read the magazine article again. Why is human population growth a threat to wildlife?

Listening

- 6** Listen to a conversation between two scientists. Mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 1 ___ The man thinks farms fail because there isn't enough water.
- 2 ___ Diseases from invasive species can spread to humans.
- 3 ___ One solution to the invasive species problem is to inspect international shipments.

- 7** Listen again and complete the conversation.

Scientist 1: That presentation on threats to wildlife was interesting, 1 _____?

Scientist 2: Yes, it was very informative.

Scientist 1: 2 _____ was the rate of habitat destruction. Fifty million acres a year in rainforests alone!

Scientist 2: Yes, that 3 _____ me, too.

Scientist 1: And the worst part is, in some cases, it's all for nothing. Many farms fail because the land isn't 4 _____.

Scientist 2: It's terrible. We really need to do more to protect natural habitats.

Scientist 1: I agree. But people need to know that habitat destruction and 5 _____ aren't the only problems.

Scientist 2: Yeah, I was surprised by the information about 6 _____.

Speaking

- 8** With a partner, act out the roles below based on Task 7. Then switch roles.

USE LANGUAGE SUCH AS:

What struck me was ...
The worst part is ...
They cause so many problems.

Student A: You are a scientist. You just heard a presentation on threats to wildlife. Talk to Student B about:

- points that you thought were interesting or surprising
- problems brought up in the presentation
- ways to solve those problems

Student B: You are a scientist. Talk to Student A about the presentation that you both heard.

Writing

- 9** Use the magazine article and the conversation from Task 8 to write a report about threats to wildlife. Include: information about at least one major threat, problems caused by this threat, and possible solutions.

