2.5 Endangered Species

What are endangered species?

> Do you know the name of these animals?

> They are lovely animals. The number of them in the world is decreasing. It is a pity if they become extinct.
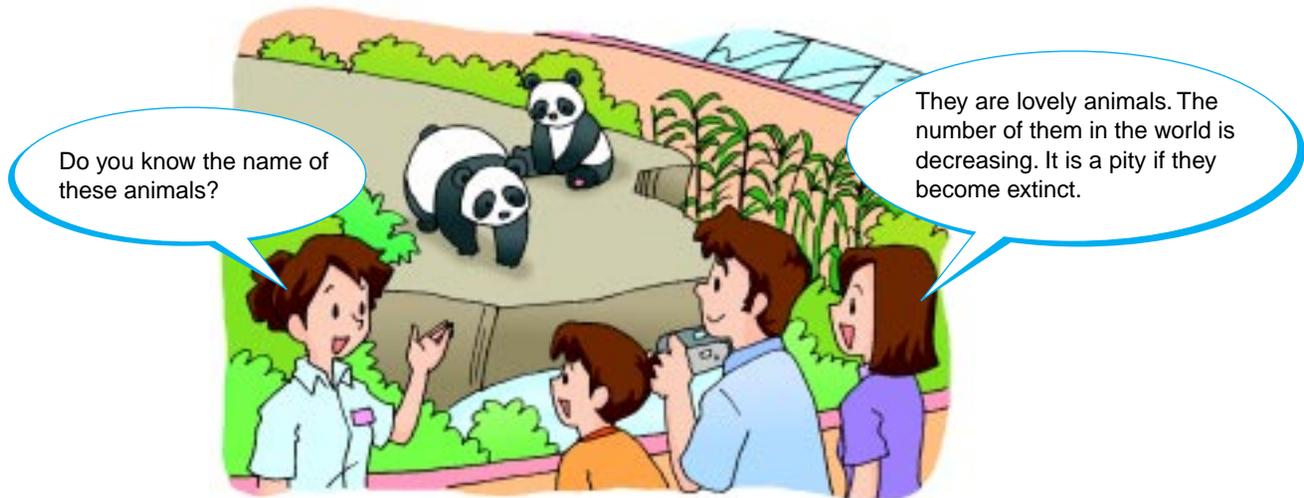
Living things can reproduce to produce offspring*. However, some of them die without leaving any offspring. Therefore, the number of certain kinds of living things is decreasing. They may never be seen on the Earth again. In other words, they may become extinct*. The danger of **extinction** is threatening* many animals and plants.

Key Point The living things that are in danger of extinction are called **endangered species**.

Up to now, there are about 25,000 endangered species around the world. Some of the well-known endangered animals are the Giant Panda*, rhinoceros*, elephant, Chinese White Dolphin* and blue whale*.
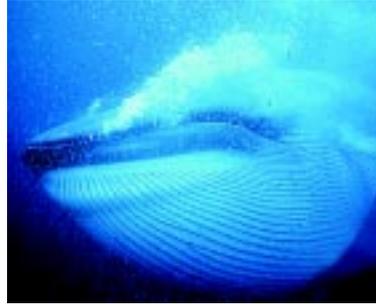

Giant Panda   *Rhinoceros*   *Elephant*

Fig. 2.8(a) *Examples of endangered animals on land*

endangered species 瀕臨絕種生物   blue whale 藍鯨   Chinese White Dolphin 中華白海豚   extinct 絕種
extinction 絕種   Giant Panda 大熊貓   offspring 後代   rhinoceros 犀牛   threatening 威脅

Chinese White Dolphin

Blue whale

Fig. 2.8(b) *Examples of endangered animals in the sea*

Let's Search

Visit the following websites to learn more about endangered species.

http://eelink.net/EndSpp/endangeredspecies-faq.html
http://www.wwf.org.hk/eng/conservation/spe_cons/index.html

Activity Centre

2J Studying an endangered animal

Read the following passage and answer the questions on the next page.

Giant Panda

Giant Pandas mainly live in Xichuan (四川), China. In June 2004, it was reported that there were less than 1,600 pandas in the wild in China. There were also 161 pandas reared by people, including 23 in other countries.

Giant Pandas live in mountains where there are large bamboo forests. Bamboo is their major food. When there is a shortage of bamboo and if their habitats are destroyed, they will immediately face starvation[*].

Giant Panda

starvation 飢餓

The Giant Panda has a low birth rate*. It gives birth to one baby each time in spring. The newborn baby panda depends* completely on its mother. However, the Giant Panda is a very careless mother.

To protect the Giant Panda from extinction, people try to save their habitats and help them produce more offspring by artificial breeding*.

(a) What habitats do Giant Pandas live in?

_____

(b) What do Giant Pandas eat?

_____

(c) How many Giant Pandas are left in China now?

_____

(d) Why are Giant Pandas endangered?

_____

_____

(e) How can we protect Giant Pandas from extinction?

_____

_____

Apart from animals, many plants are also endangered. One of the well-known endangered plants is the Pitcher plant*. This plant mainly feeds on insects. It became endangered because of collection by people for sale and loss of habitats in tropical rainforests*.

Fig. 2.9 The Pitcher plant

Reasons for becoming endangered

Do you know why some living things become endangered? Let us try the following activity.

Activity Centre

2K **Why do these animals become endangered?**

You are given the following photos of endangered animals and the major reasons why they become endangered. Match each animal and the reason why it is endangered.

(a)

Rhinoceros

•   • (i)   water pollution*

(b)

Elephant

•   • (ii) loss of habitats along their migratory route*

(c)

Chinese White Dolphin

•   • (iii) hunting for their horns*

(d)

*Chinese egretta**

•   • (iv) hunting for their ivory*

Chinese egretta 黃咀白鷺   horns 角   ivory 象牙   migratory route 遷徙路線
pollution 污染

1. Destruction of habitats

Humans destroy the natural habitats of living things for building cities, getting resources* such as wood for making paper, etc. As the world population increases, more and more habitats are destroyed.

Fig. 2.10 Cutting down large amounts of trees destroys the habitats of the gorilla.

Fig. 2.11 Construction of the Hong Kong International Airport destroyed the habitats of the Romer's tree frog*.

2. Pollution

As human activities go on, a lot of waste products are produced every day. For example, harmful gases are released from factories and vehicles; household*, industrial* and agricultural* sewage* is released into rivers and the sea. These waste products are harmful to living things.

Fig. 2.12 Water pollution destroys the habitats of the Chinese White Dolphin.

Let's Search

Carry out a library or Internet search for information about one kind of living thing threatened by pollution.

agricultural 農業的   household 家居的   industrial 工業的
resources 資源   Romer's tree frog 盧文氏樹蛙   sewage 污水

3. Hunting

Humans hunt animals for various purposes. These hunting activities lead to the extinction of many living things. Examples are shown in Figs. 2.13 to 2.16.

Fig. 2.13 *Crocodiles are hunted for their skin to make bags and shoes.*

Fig. 2.14 *Elephants are hunted for their ivory to make crafts*.*

Fig. 2.15 *Whales are hunted for their oil to make perfumes.*

Fig. 2.16 *Rhinoceros are hunted for their horns to prepare Chinese medicines.*

Let's Search

Trading and importing some kinds of endangered species and their products are banned* in Hong Kong. Carry out a library or Internet search for information about this.

Let's Think

Can you think of other human activities which endanger the lives of living things?

Key Point Destroying habitats, polluting the environment and hunting are human activities which have endangered the lives of many living things and led to their extinction.

Apart from the government and other organisations, what can we do to protect endangered species?

1. Do not buy any products made from endangered species, such as fur coats and crafts made from ivory.

Fig. 2.22 *Do not buy fur coats.*

Fig. 2.23 *Do not buy crafts made from ivory.*

2. Do not keep endangered animals like hawks or owls as pets*.

Fig. 2.24 *Hawks*

Fig. 2.25 *Owls*

3. Do not pick plants and hunt animals.

Fig. 2.26 *Do not pick plants.*

Fig. 2.27 *Do not hunt animals.*

4. Do not eat wild game* dishes such as bear paws* and pangolins*.

Fig. 2.28 *Bear paws*

Fig. 2.29 *Pangolins*

Apart from the above actions, we have to protect the environment so as to protect the habitats for wildlife. Do you know how?

bear paws 熊掌   wild game 野味   pangolins 穿山甲   pets 寵物