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Special School Photocopy Master Edition

Endangered Animals Resource Book



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by Jane Bourke



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Animals Dying Out



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There are millions of animal species that live in Australia and New Zealand. Most of these species are unique to each country and are found nowhere else in the world except in captivity. The species may live in **aquatic** (water) environments or **terrestrial** (land) environments.

Over the years, many things have changed the way animals and plants interact with their environment and some of these things have changed the balance in the **ecosystem**. Sometimes, the animals are able to adapt to the changes but quite often the changes have meant that the animals are not able to survive.

THREATS AT A GLANCE

Habitat Loss

Clearing the land:

- For buildings and houses
- For farming

Natural Disasters

- Bushfire
- Drought
- Flood

Introduced Species

Pests – compete with native animals for food sources

Weeds – compete with plants which are a food source for native animals

Predators – prey on native animals

Cattle – even though cattle are a food source for humans, they have damaged the natural environment

Check out the GLOSSARY on page 58 for any words you are not sure about.



DID YOU KNOW?

Since European settlement 200 years ago, hundreds of species have become extinct. This means they are no longer existing in any part of the world. Australian scientists say that at least fifty bird and mammal species, four frog species, and more than sixty plant species have disappeared – and these are only the ones they know about! Some species are in more danger than others.



Threats to Survival

HABITAT LOSS

Imagine if you came home from school one day and your home was gone and possibly your family too! Well, this is the problem that millions of living things are facing everyday. Many animal habitats are lost or destroyed to make room for new buildings or houses. Forest habitats can disappear when trees are cut down, when bushland is cleared, when areas are prepared for mining and other industrial activities, and when weeds and pests take over an area.



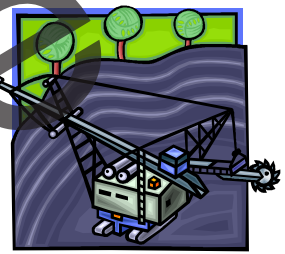
LOGGING



**POLLUTED
WATERWAYS**



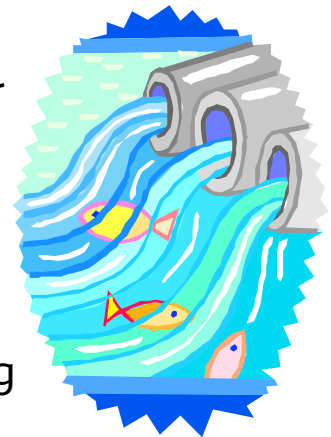
**INDUSTRIAL
POLLUTION**



MINING

Habitat Change

Changes to an animal's habitat can occur after a natural disaster such as fire, flood, drought or storm. After a while, these areas may return to what they used to be like, but in the meantime many animals will have nowhere to find shelter or may have even been killed during the disaster.



Aquatic habitats, such as rivers, lakes and oceans, can be affected by industrial activity such as run off into waterways. The run off can contain harmful pesticides, herbicides, fertilisers, sewage, oil, toxic chemicals and sediments. These things can kill marine species or make them very sick. They also damage the natural environment that aquatic animals depend on for food and shelter.



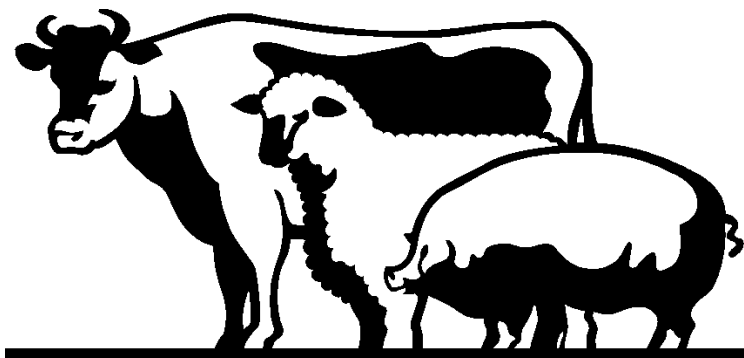
Introduced Species

Many animal and plant species have been brought to Australia and New Zealand from other parts of the world. These animals are known as **introduced species** as they are not native to the area.

Different animal species were brought here by early settlers for a number of reasons.

- Some species have been used for farming, e.g. chickens, sheep and cows.
- Some species have been used in sporting events, e.g. horses and greyhounds.
- Some animals have been brought here as pets, e.g. cats and dogs.

Some of these animals have caused a lot of damage to the environment. For example, many animal species have upset the ecosystem by preying on the eggs and young of native species. Other animals compete with native species for food and space while some types of fish, such as the European carp, muddy waterways and upset other species' habitats that exist within a natural ecosystem.



MEET THE ANIMALS

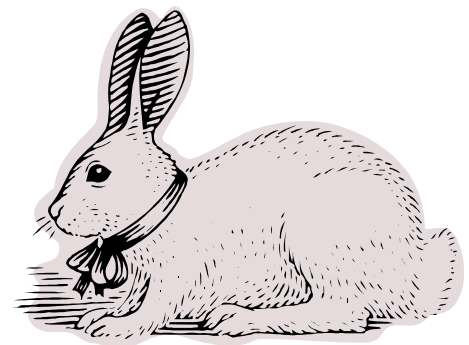
Early settlers bought these animals with them:

Cats, dogs, goats, cows, sheep, rabbits, foxes, camels, pigs, foxes, deer and more.

Oh, and they accidentally bought along mice and rats!



PEST PARADE



Click here to see a school project on Australia's pests:

► www.teachingtreasures.com.au/science-projects/pests.htm



Classifying Threatened Species

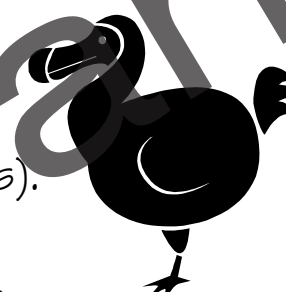
ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES FIT INTO ONE OF THESE GROUPS:

EXTINCT:

A species is said to be **extinct** when there are no living individuals in existence. Extinctions can be hard to prove and a limit of 50 years with no official sightings of the species is now used. Around 65 million years ago, dinosaurs became extinct. Other examples of extinct species include:

- **Dodo bird** - Last seen in 1681 (*Mauritius*).
- **Thylacine** - Last seen in 1936 (*Australia*) - also known as the *Tasmanian Tiger*.
- **Steller's sea cow** - Last recorded sighting in 1768 (*Pacific Ocean*).

Each day, more and more species are becoming extinct. Many of the species that were roaming about the earth millions of year ago are now extinct.



EXTINCT IN THE WILD:

Sometimes a species is only found in captivity (i.e. a zoo program) or as a naturalised population outside its past range. Examples include:

- **Saudi gazelle** - Saudi Arabia
- **Hawaiian crow** - Hawaiian Islands

Many zoos are set up to look after endangered species. These zoos have special breeding programs which aim to increase the numbers of the species.

