

Back from the Brink

After years of protection, a number of endangered¹ animals are making a comeback.

The future looks bright for some endangered animals! Thanks to tough laws and hardworking scientists, many of these animals are doing well.



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Bald Eagles are making a comeback.

The bald eagle is one success story. The bird became the **symbol**² of the United States in 1782. At that time, about 100,000 bald eagles lived in what is now the continental United States. By 1963, only 417 nesting pairs remained.

Hunting and loss of habitat contributed to the decline, or drop in number. However, the biggest threat came from DDT, a chemical used for farming. DDT made the birds' eggshells so thin that chicks couldn't survive.

¹ **endangered:** threatened with extinction

² **symbol:** something that represents something else

Saving the Bald Eagles

In 1972, DDT was **banned**, or not allowed. In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was created. That law protects threatened plants and animals. Bald eagles soon gained protection under this law.

By 2006, there were more than 7,000 bald eagle nesting pairs in the lower 48 states. In August 2007, the bald eagle was officially taken off the federal list of threatened and endangered animals. However, it has continued to be protected by other laws.

"It is a good endangered species success story," spokesperson Nicholas Throckmorton of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service told *Weekly Reader*. "Caring citizens have brought our national symbol back from the brink of extinction."

Strength in Numbers

The bald eagle isn't the only species to have seen an increase in its population. Here are some other success stories.

- **Grizzly bears** in and around Yellowstone National Park were endangered as a result of hunting and habitat loss. By 1975, only 220 to 320 bears lived in Yellowstone. By 2007, there were more than 600.
- People used to hunt **Hawaiian green sea turtles**. In 1973, scientists counted only 67 nesting females. 35 years later the number of nesting females jumped to more than 400.
- **Southern sea otters** of California were once killed by pollution and fishermen. There were only 700 otters off the coast of California in 1938. By 2007, there were more than 2,500.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. When was the bald eagle removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered animals?

- A 1972
- B 1973
- C 2007
- D 2013

2. Read these two sentences from the passage:

"Hunting and loss of habitat contributed to the decline or loss in number [of bald eagles]."
"By 1963, only 417 nesting pairs [of bald eagles] remained."

Which of the following describes the relationship between these two sentences?

- A The two sentences make a comparison.
- B The first explains the reason for the second.
- C The two sentences contrast two events.
- D The sentences describe two steps in a process.

3. Which of the following conclusions about the Endangered Species Act is supported by the passage?

- A It saved endangered animals from extinction.
- B It stopped the threat of the chemical DDT.
- C It helped the bald eagle become a U.S. symbol.
- D It helped make bald eagles' eggshells thicker.

4. Read this sentence from the passage: "Caring citizens have brought our national symbol back from the brink of extinction."

Based on the text, the word **brink** means

- A success
- B law
- C edge
- D crime

5. Which statement supports the main idea of this passage?

- A Caring citizens have brought our national symbol back.
- B The future is bright for some endangered animals!
- C By 1975, only 220 to 320 bears lived in Yellowstone.
- D People used to hunt Hawaiian green sea turtles.

6. What once killed Southern sea otters?

7. Why might bald eagles still be protected by other U.S. laws even though they have been removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered animals?

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Scientists worked to save endangered animals. _____, the animals were taken off the Endangered Species list.

- A First
- B Earlier
- C However
- D Therefore

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

The biggest threat to the population of bald eagles came from DDT because this chemical made the birds' eggshells so thin that chicks couldn't survive.

What? the biggest threat to the population of bald eagles

(did) What? _____

Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** contribute: to say or do things that help make something successful.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 780

Featured Text Structure: Cause/Effect – the writer presents the reason an event happened and its results

Passage Summary: The passage describes the necessary protection the bald eagle has received in the last several decades which has resulted in an increase in its population and removal from the federal list of threatened and endangered animals. Other species that have also experienced an increase in population size are also highlighted in the passage.

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6. What once killed Southern sea otters?

Suggested answer: Southern sea otters were once killed by pollution and fishermen. [paragraph 10]

7. Why might bald eagles still be protected by other U.S. laws even though they have been removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered animals?

Suggested answer: This is most likely a precautionary measure that prohibits hunting activities and other dangers to the species from taking place that might put the bald eagle's population at risk once more. Thus, the bald eagle still needs some sort of legal protection that would prevent it from reaching an endangered species status. [paragraph 5]

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(did) What? **came from DDT**

Why? **this chemical made the birds' eggshells so thin that chicks couldn't survive**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** contribute: to say or do things that help make something successful.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.