

## Wildlife in Danger: Human Causes

*An activity of "Earth's health depends on more than cute animals"*

"Earth's health depends on more than cute animals" (page 16–17, *What's Up* March 2020) tells of how a million species are facing extinction. Flora and fauna are an indispensable part of our existence. Our interdependence is complex. However, many people do not seem to understand this. Read the article carefully. Work in pairs to answer the questions below.

- Listed below are some major causes of why species become extinct. Tick the box beside them if you think the causes are not a result of human activity. Write your reasons on the back of this sheet.
 

a. <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical pollution	d. <input type="checkbox"/> Climate change
b. <input type="checkbox"/> Excess harvesting of fish	e. <input type="checkbox"/> Poaching of wildlife
c. <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat loss	f. <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction of non-native species into habitats.
- Below are five examples of how some species became extinct or endangered. In the box next to each example, write the letter from Question 1 that gives the cause of this extinction.

	Example of species extinction or endangerment	Cause
i	In the island of Hawaii, rats destroyed sugar cane fields. The Indian mongoose was introduced to solve this problem. However, the mongoose population multiplied without control as it had no natural predators. The mongoose attacked not just rats, but also eggs of ground-nesting birds. Eight species of birds are said to have become extinct because of the mongoose.	
ii	Coral reefs are said to be the most diverse ecosystems on the planet. Algae provides food for corals. The warming of ocean waters harms some types of algae and causes coral bleaching. The corals then slowly die. Thousands of fish species gather at coral reefs to lay eggs. The extinction of corals have serious consequences for the baby fish that hatch because they spend their growing years among these corals before heading out into the ocean.	
iii	Large areas of rainforests in Africa, Latin America, Malaysia, and Indonesia are being cleared to create oil palm plantations. In most cases, this is done by setting fire to the forests. Orangutans, tigers, elephants, and rhinos in those forests are deprived of their food and habitats. They are under the threat of extinction.	
iv	As pollinators, bees are critical to agriculture. A new type of pesticide was introduced 25 years ago to protect more than 140 types of crops. This pesticide has been killing off bees in large numbers. In 2019, it was estimated that more than 40% of the bee population in the US alone had been killed. Imagine if bees became extinct.	
v	Millions of sharks were killed every year for their fins to be used in shark-fin soup, an East Asian delicacy. After the fins of these sharks were harvested, the carcasses were thrown overboard. The killing almost drove the shark population to extinction. It took an international treaty in 2013 to ban this practice and stop sharks from going extinct.	