

## Animals in danger

Fossils tell us that animals, such as fishes, reptiles and large mammals, lived on earth many millions of years before man. Later, early man's life was always threatened by the huge animals which roamed the world. Today, the situation is reversed. Many wild animals are threatened by man. In the press, attention is most often concentrated on the problems of the whale, but many other animals are in danger, too. Here is some information about three of them.

*The American bison.* In the year 1700, about 60 million bison wandered freely in North America. Their range was very wide and they were still multiplying despite being hunted by Indians. Today, the bison population of North America is around 10,000, a mere fraction of the former total. How does this terrible decimation come about? The white man and his rifle must take the blame. During the building of the Union Pacific Railway, the bison was hunted more for pleasure than for its meat. By the 1890s, only a few hundred bison were left. The recent increase in numbers has been made possible only by strict government control over hunting. Now the bison is threatened more by infectious disease than by hunters. Its breeding areas are all protected.

*The tiger.* The tiger has suffered badly from its reputation as the enemy of man. It has been hunted so extensively that there now probably fewer than 1,000 tigers in the wild. Members of the tiger population have decreased in proportion to the expansion of human population in areas where it used to roam freely. The human population of Asia has grown so dense that the future of the tiger looks black. Soon the only tigers may be in zoos.

*The Komodo dragon.* The Komodo dragon is the world's largest lizard. It was not discovered until this century and was named only in 1912. It was formerly found on three Indonesian islands: Komodo, Rintja and Flores. By the 1930s, in spite of government protection, the population of this great hunting lizard had been reduced to a few hundred. It was, however, still found on the three main islands of its range there were still individuals of over four metres in length. By 1963, after an interval of only fifty years of its discovery, almost the entire population was based on Komodo. It is now unusual to see one as long as 3 metres. The dragon's normal diet consists mainly of deer and wild pigs, animals which the islanders also hunt. This, of course, means that the dragon often gets too little to eat. It will certainly die out soon unless its hunting and breeding grounds are protected more effectively.

### Part One: Reading comprehension

A. Answer these questions.

1. Fossils are the evidence that man was not the first form of life on Earth
2. Bison are now increasing again in the USA because of the strict government control over their hunting.
3. The tiger population is affected by the expansion of the human population over its areas
4. The Komodo dragon was discovered by the beginning of 1900.
5. The Komodo dragon eats mainly deer and wild pigs.

B. Make questions for these answers.

1. How many bison wandered freely in North America by the year 1700?
2. How many bison were left by the 1890s?
3. What is the tiger supposed to be?
4. Is the Komodo dragon found now in all three islands?.
5. What do the tiger and the Komodo dragon have in common?

C. Check whether these statements are true or false and correct the false ones.

1. Wild animals today threaten man. **FALSE**
2. The whale is not the only animal threatened by man. **TRUE**
3. Men building the Union Pacific Railway hunted the bison for food. **FALSE**
4. The average size of Komodo dragon is decreasing. **TRUE**

D. Word study: find in the article words that correspond to each definition

1. **Diet** : The usual food of a living thing.
2. **Reversed** .: The other way round. When a driver parks his car, he usually drives backward into the space.
3. **Breeding areas** : Areas where animals reproduce.
4. **Range** : The maximum area over which a certain plant or animal is usually found.
5. **The press** : A general word for newspapers and magazines.
6. **Interval** : A period between two dates or times.
7. **Roamed** : wandered around.

E. Word building

*The process of governing* a country is a great responsibility.

This sentence can be shortened to:

→ **The government of** a country is a great responsibility.

**To govern** → **government**

**To establish** → **establishment**

**BUT**

**To statE** → **statEment**

**To managE** → **managEment**

Rewrite these sentences in the same way, using words ending in –ment to replace the phrases in italics.

1. *The process of treating* seeds with derris prevents many plant diseases.  
→ **The treatment of seeds with derris prevent many plant diseases.**
2. *The process of developing* new pesticides will help the farmers to increase their harvests.  
→ **The development of news pesticides will help the farmers to improve their harvest.**
3. Changes in our diet result from *the process of improving* food technology.  
→ **Changes in our diet result from the improvement in/of food technology.**
4. New techniques have been developed to help *the process of measuring* the age of fossils.  
→ **New techniques have been developed to help the measurement of the age of fossils.**