

Endangered Species — Non-Fiction

Non-fiction texts are any bits of writing that tell you facts. They can also be about something that really happened. A science book is non-fiction, and so is a newspaper or magazine. Read the text, read it again, and then go on to the questions.

Endangered Species in Britain

Britain is home to a unique array of wildlife, from beetles to badgers, hawks to hedgehogs. These diverse and fascinating wild animals are a vital part of our natural world. Unfortunately, some humans are seriously damaging the environment in the UK and threatening many of these creatures with extinction. Almost two-thirds of Britain's species have declined in the last 50 years, and if they are not protected, these animals will disappear from the UK forever. Many people believe that much of Britain's wildlife is under threat...

Red Squirrels



It may seem surprising, given how rare they are today, but in the past, the only squirrels in the UK were red squirrels. In the 1870s, however, grey squirrels were introduced to Britain from the USA, and these larger American squirrels have gradually pushed out their smaller British cousins. Today, it is estimated that only around 140,000 red squirrels survive in Britain, compared with over 2.5 million grey squirrels. According to George Percy of the charity *Save the Squirrel*, the ongoing decline in red squirrel numbers represents a national tragedy for the UK.

Bumblebees



Since the 1940s, bumblebee numbers have fallen sharply in the UK. This bumblebee crisis is largely due to loss of habitat. Bumblebees rely on wildflowers to survive, but in recent decades, there has been a serious decline in the numbers of wildflowers throughout Britain. The decline of bumblebees may also be due to some of the chemicals (pesticides) that farmers use to prevent insects from feasting on their crops. However, a link between pesticides and falling bumblebee numbers has not been proved conclusively.

How are conservationists helping?

Habitat protection and creation

Conservationists protect the natural areas that provide habitats for endangered species. They also create new areas where animals can live safely.

Captive breeding schemes

Animals are bred in captivity (for example, at a zoo), and then reintroduced into the wild. In Britain, captive breeding programmes have helped to protect harvest mice, water voles and Scottish wildcats from extinction.

Raising awareness

By encouraging people to take an interest in the natural world, conservationists inspire members of the public to help protect endangered species.

Conservationists work to protect plants, animals and the natural world.

Otters — a conservation success story



Otters live by lakes, rivers, streams and ponds, and they spend much of their time in the water. In the 1960s and 1970s, Britain's otters came close to extinction. This was mainly a consequence of pesticide pollution — pesticides were washed from farmers' fields into the lakes and rivers where otters live. By 1979, most of these harmful pesticides were banned. Efforts were also made to clean up rivers, and the government introduced laws that made it illegal to kill otters. Thanks to these measures, otters are now thriving throughout Britain.

"Otters were a common sight when I was growing up in the 1950s. It was heartbreaking when they began to disappear from our local streams. Otters are such lovely creatures, and I'm so glad that I've been able to help bring them back to Norfolk's waterways."

— Florence Jamison
Norfolk Otter Trust

How can YOU help?

Become a hedgehog hero — help protect Britain's prickliest mammal by making your garden hedgehog friendly. Create some cosy spots where hedgehogs can hibernate — they love compost heaps, leaf piles and stacks of logs.

Grow flowers for bumblebees — bees need pollen from flowers to survive. Give them a helping hand by planting some of their favourite blooms in your garden. Bumblebees are particularly fond of foxgloves, honeysuckle and lavender.

Take part in a wildlife survey — you'll get to know the animals around you and make a real contribution to conservation. There are surveys focusing on all sorts of species, so whether your passion is for butterflies, birds or bats, there's a survey that's right for you.

Hold a fundraising event — conservation charities rely on donations to do their work. You can raise money to help support your favourite charity by organising a fundraising event, such as a bake sale or a sponsored bike ride.