

Global warming threatens to kill off a million species

Level 1 | Elementary

1 Key vocabulary

Look at these words:

extinct

extinction

Mammoths lived on the earth thousands of years ago. There are no mammoths now. Mammoths are *extinct*.

The dodo was a strange bird that lived on the island of Mauritius. The last dodo died in the 18th century. Dodos are *extinct*.

Today many animals are in danger of *extinction*.

What does *extinct* mean? Choose the best answer:

- a. very large
- b. no longer existing
- c. interesting

2 Correct the information

Look in the text and correct the information in these sentences.

1. 50% of land animals and plants will become extinct during the next 60 years.
2. More than 10 million plants and animals will become extinct by 2080.
3. More than 20% of all plants and animals will become extinct.
4. They studied 12 species of butterfly in Australia.
5. 80% of the species in the Kruger National Park will die out.
6. They studied 70 species of tree in Brazil.
7. They studied 2,870 species in Mexico.
8. We will not know the true results for 50 years.

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The earth is getting warmer. People burn coal, oil and gas and this produces carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane and nitrous oxide. These gases, called 'greenhouse gases', stop the heat of the sun from leaving the earth's upper atmosphere and this makes the earth warmer, a process called 'global warming'.

A few weeks ago a group of scientists produced a report about global warming and the natural world. They wanted to find out if global warming was dangerous for plants and animals. The scientists were shocked by what they found. They say that during the next 50 years about 25% of land animals and plants will become extinct. More than 1 million plant and animal species will become extinct by 2050.

The head of the research team, Chris Thomas, who is professor of conservation biology at Leeds

University, said the results of their research were "terrifying". More than 10% of all plants and animals will become extinct. It is too late to save many plants and animals because of the greenhouse gases that are already in the atmosphere. But the scientists say if we control greenhouse gases now, we could save many more plants and animals from extinction.

The scientists studied some regions of the world with a very rich biology. These regions were Europe, Australia, Central and South America, and South Africa. Their studies showed that species living in mountainous areas had a better chance of survival because they could move uphill to get cooler. In flat areas, such as deserts, plants and animals would have to move very long distances to get cooler, so they are in greater danger of extinction.

The scientists found many shocking things. For example, they found that half of the 24 species of butterfly they studied in Australia would soon become extinct. 60% of the species in the

Kruger National Park in South Africa would also die out, and more than 100 of the 300 South African plant species they studied would also become extinct. One of the plants in danger of extinction is the national flower of South Africa, the King Protea.

They studied 163 tree species in the Cerrado region of Brazil and found that 70 would become extinct. Many of the plants and trees that live in this region live nowhere else in the world. In Mexico, they studied 1,870 species and found that more than 30% of these were in danger of extinction.

Global warming is getting worse. Many countries, particularly the USA and the European countries, are continuing to produce greenhouse gases. We will not know the true results of this for 25 years but if people continue to burn oil, coal and gas at the same rate as today, about 30% of all life forms will become extinct by 2050.

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer.

1. Why are greenhouse gases dangerous?
 - a. Because people burn coal, oil and gas.
 - b. Because they cause global warming.
 - c. Because they stop the heat of the sun reaching the earth.
2. Why is global warming bad for animals and plants?
 - a. Because many of them will become extinct if global warming continues.
 - b. Because it is too late to save many plants and animals.
 - c. Because some regions of the world have a very rich biology.
3. Why do animals in mountainous regions have a better chance of survival?
 - a. Because they have to move long distances to get cooler.
 - b. Because they can move uphill to get cooler.
 - c. Because there are no deserts in mountainous regions.
4. What could happen to the national flower of South Africa?
 - a. It could become extinct.
 - b. It could grow in the Kruger National Park.
 - c. People could study it.
5. What will happen if people continue to produce greenhouse gases?
 - a. The earth will get colder.
 - b. We will not know the true results for 25 years.
 - c. 30% of all life forms will become extinct by 2050.

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4 Vocabulary

Find the words which mean:

1. Very, very surprised
2. Very, very frightening
3. The opposite of 'poor'
4. A flat, dry area without many plants or water
5. Another expression for 'to become extinct'
6. The opposite of 'downhill'
7. Another word for 'regions'
8. A word which means 'especially'

5 Prepositions

Fill the gaps using an appropriate preposition.

1. _____ example, ...
2. They were shocked _____ what they found.
3. They want to save plants and animals _____ extinction.
4. Some species have a better chance _____ survival.
5. The King Protea is the national flower _____ South Africa.
6. Many _____ the plants that live in this region are very rare.
7. 30% of all life forms may become extinct _____ 2050.
8. Global warming is dangerous _____ plants and animals.

6 Puzzle

Rewrite the following to make words from the text.

1. icepess
2. hogneurese
3. atomunusion
4. bogall
5. nitcext
6. futbertly