Reading 2

Pick from a list

4 You are going to read more about the honey badger. Before you do this, look at the exam question in the box and answer the questions 1-4.

1 Why did the wildlife experts visit the Kalahari desert? Choose two reasons.

A To find where honey badgers live.
B To observe how honey badgers behave.
C To try to change the way honey badgers behave.
D To temporarily catch some honey badgers.
E To find out why honey badgers have such a bad reputation.



On the trail of the honey badger

Researchers learn more about this fearless African predator

On a recent field trip to the Kalahari Desert, a team of researchers learnt a lot more about honey badgers. They were rewarded with a detailed insight into how these fascinating creatures live and hunt.

The team employed a local wildlife expert, Kitso Khama, to help them locate and follow the badgers across the desert. Their main aim was to study the badgers' movements and behaviour as discreetly as possible, without frightening them away or causing them to change their natural behaviour. They also planned to trap a few and study them close up before releasing them. In view of the animal's reputation, this was something that even Khama was reluctant to do.

'The problem with honey badgers is they are naturally curious animals, especially when they see something new,' he says. 'That, combined with their unpredictable nature, can be a dangerous mixture. If they sense you have food, for example, they won't be shy about coming right up to you for something to eat. They're actually quite sociable creatures around humans, but as soon as they feel they might be in danger, they can become extremely vicious. Fortunately this is rare, but it does happen.'

The research confirmed many things that were already known. As expected, honey badgers ate any creatures they could catch and kill. Even poisonous snakes, feared and avoided by most other animals, were not safe from them. The researchers were surprised, however, by the animal's fondness for local melons, probably because of their high water content. Previously researchers thought that the animal got all of its liquid requirements from its prey. The team also learnt that, contrary to previous research findings, the badgers occasionally formed loose family groups. They were also able to confirm certain results from previous research, including the fact that female badgers never socialised with each other.

Following some of the male badgers was a challenge, since they can cover large distances in a short space of time. Some hunting territories cover more than 500 square kilometres. Although they seem happy to share these territories with other males, there are occasional fights over an important food source, and male badgers can be as aggressive towards each other as they are towards other species.

As the badgers became accustomed to the presence of people, it gave the team the chance to get up close to them without being the subject of the animals' curiosity – or their sudden aggression. The badgers' eating patterns, which had been disrupted, returned to normal. It also allowed the team to observe more closely some of the other creatures that form working associations with the honey badger, as these seemed to adopt the badgers' relaxed attitude when near humans.

5 Read the rest of the passage and choose TWO letters, A–E, for Questions 2–5.

Questions 2–5

2 What two things does Kitso Khama say about honey badgers?

A They show interest in things they are not familiar with.
B It's hard to tell how they will behave.
C They are always looking for food.

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D They do not enjoy human company.
E It is common for them to attack people.

3 What two things did the team find out about honey badgers?
A There are some creatures they will not eat.
B They were afraid of poisonous creatures.
C They may get some of the water they need from fruit.
D They do not always live alone.
E Female badgers do not mix with male badgers.

4 According to the passage, which of these two features are typical of male badgers?
A They don't run very quickly.
B They hunt over a very large area.
C They defend their territory from other badgers.
D They sometimes fight each other.
E They are more aggressive than females.

5 What two things happened when the honey badgers got used to humans being around them?
A The badgers lost interest in people.
B The badgers became less aggressive towards other creatures.
C The badgers started eating more.
D Other animals started working with the badgers.
E Other animals near them became more relaxed.

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