1

The Endangered African Rhino

The rhinoceros is Africa's armoured giant – like a tank on legs – and has been on our planet for millions of years. But right now they need our help. Poaching of rhinos for their horns and habitat loss are huge threats to both white and black rhinos.

White rhinos (the name doesn't come from their colour but originally a reference to their 'wide' mouths) have had mixed fortunes. Sadly there are no 'northern' white rhinos left in the wild, and only a handful in captivity. But the 'southern' white rhino is a conservation success story – it's been helped back from under 100 in 1895 to over 20,000 in the wild today.

For the black rhino (slightly smaller, with a more pointed top lip) the worst period was between 1970 and 1992, when around 96% of them were lost to wide-scale poaching. Only 5,000 are left in the wild today.

Poaching of rhinos for rhino horn is still a huge threat, and the poachers have got increasingly better equipped. To ensure that these incredibly precious creatures survive, more action needs to be taken against this Illegal wildlife trade.

Questions 1 – 4

Answer the questions below.

*Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** from the text for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 1-4 on your answer sheet.

1 What is the African rhinoceros compared to?

2 Which type of rhino fell in number to below a hundred?

3 What percentage of black rhinos had been illegally killed by 1992?

4 How have the criminals improved their success?

2

The History of Easter Eggs

Easter eggs, also called Paschal eggs, are special eggs that are often given to celebrate Easter or springtime. The practice of decorating eggshell is ancient. Ostrich eggs with engraved decoration that are 60,000 years old have been found in Africa. In Europe, it was traditional to use dyed and painted chicken eggs at Easter, but a modern custom is to substitute chocolate eggs, or plastic eggs filled with confectionery such as jelly beans.

Easter eggs are a widely popular symbol of new life in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, and other Central European countries where they are concealed in the garden for children to find. The

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British Queen, Queen Victoria, was also known to enjoy egg hunts, organizing them for her children inside Kensington Palace in London which brought the tradition to the UK. Eggs, in general, were a traditional symbol of fertility and rebirth. Some magic rituals, these days, often use eggs to promote fertility and restore virility (of the body and mind; and to foresee the future.

The Easter Bunny is another symbol associated with Easter but the origin is unclear. Some people believe that the Easter Bunny came about because both eggs and rabbits are often seen as symbols of fertility. Others believe the Easter Bunny originated in Germany were it was a judge of how well-behaved children had been by the start of the season. The naughty or nice theme for children can be seen again in the tradition of Santa Claus at Christmas. Nowadays, in many countries, the Easter bunny is responsible for bringing the children their Easter eggs.

Questions 1-5

Answer the questions below. Choose NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS from the passage for each answer.

1. What is another name for Easter Eggs?
2. What type of eggs were formerly used at Easter in Europe?
3. Where are egg hunts often conducted as part of a hide and seek game in some countries?
4. What did eggs represent on the whole?
5. What determined if children had been naughty or nice at the beginning of Spring?

3

The Dingo - An Australian Pest

The origins of the dingo are obscure, and there is much controversy connected with this. It is not truly native to Australia but is thought to have arrived between 3,500 and 4,000 years ago. Whatever its origins, the dingo was a highly valued companion to the aborigines. They were hunting companions, guard dogs, and they kept them warm at night.

Some believe they were brought here on rafts or boats by the ancestral aborigines. It has also been suggested that they came with Indonesian or South-East Asian fishermen who visited the northern coast of Australia.

The dingo can be found in all areas of Australia - from harsh deserts to lush rainforest The highly adaptable dingo is found in every habitat and every state of Australia,except Tasmania. In deserts, access to drinking water determines where the animal can live. Purebred dingo numbers in the wild are declining as man encroaches deeper and deeper into wilderness areas, often accompanied by his domestic dog.

The dingo is different from the modern dog in several ways: it does not bark, it has a different gait, and its ears are always erect. Dingoes are naturally lean, and they are usually cream to reddish-yellow with white points, some are black with tan points. An adult dingo stands more than 60cm high and weighs about 15kg. It is slightly smaller than a German Shepherd.

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In its natural state, the dingo lives either alone or in a small group, unlike many other wild dog species which may form packs. Dingoes have a clearly defined territory which they rarely leave and which they protect from other dingoes, but which may be shared with dingoes when they form a group to hunt larger prey. The size of the home territory varies according to the food supply. Dingoes hunt mainly at night. Groups are controlled by dominant male. Members of a group maintain contact by marking rocks and trees within the territory, and by howling, particularly in the breeding season.

The dingo's diet consists of native mammals, including kangaroos, although domestic animals and some farm stock are also on the menu. This makes the animal unpopular with farmers. The dingo is thought to have contributed to the mainland extinction of the thylacine through increased competition for food.

The dingo is an intelligent animal. It is no more dangerous to man than any other feral dog. The natural prey of the dingo is small mammals and ground-dwelling birds, but with the introduction of white settlement, they became such a menace to sheep, calves and poultry that measures had to be taken in an attempt to control them, such as dog-proof fences.

Dingoes start breeding when they reach the age of one or two but only the dominant members within an established group breed. They breed only once a year. Mating usually occurs in autumn/early winter, and after a gestation of nine weeks (same as domestic dogs), a litter averaging 4-5 pups is born, which are reared in a hollow log, a rock-shelter, or an old rabbit warren. Both parents take part in raising the pups. The pups are fully grown at seven months of age. A dingo may live for up to ten years.

Wild dingoes are wary of humans and do not attack unless provoked. They will approach camps in the bush looking for food or perhaps out of curiosity. Dingoes can be kept as pets but should be obtained at a very young age to enable them to bond with humans. Even when raised from pups they never seem to lose their instinct for killing poultry or small animals. Not all states in Australia allow dingoes to be kept as pets and a permit is required. The export of dingoes is illegal.

Dingoes and domestic dogs interbreed freely resulting in very few pure-bred, southern or eastern Australia. This threatens the dingo's ability to survive as a separate species. Public hostility is another threat to the dingo. Because it takes some livestock, the dingo is considered by many to be a pest.

Questions 1-8

Answer the questions below.

Choose NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS from the passage for each answer.

1. What factor decides where the dingo can live in a desert?

2. Which physical characteristic distinguishes a dingo from a domesticated dog?

3. What term refers to a group of wild dogs?

4. What determines the vastness of the area occupied by the dingoes? Which landscape features are used by

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the group to remain connected?

5. Which landscape features are used by the group to remain connected?

6. What animal might have been wiped out due to the dingo?

7. What has been made to protect the livestock from the dingoes?

8. What do many people regard the dingo as?

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