

# New Internationalist

Easier English Ready Lesson: Intermediate +

# THE ANIMALS WE NEED



# This lesson:

- Reading
- Grammar (passive)
- Vocabulary
- Writing

# What do these photos show?:



Quick reading x 3 slides (1  
minute per slide):

What's the animal?

How can we save it?

1/ There were only 21 whooping cranes in the mid-1940s - all the others had died. This bird migrates between the US and Western Canada. They died because of habitat loss and hunting. Hunting was banned more than 20 years before, but it took a long time for the species to recover. In the 1960s biologists started to breed the cranes. They got them to produce more than one set of eggs each breeding season by taking away the first eggs and putting them in an artificial incubator. Then the cranes mated again and laid more eggs, and these stayed in the nests. The eggs in the incubator followed the humans around, and they dressed in white crane costumes to prepare the chicks for life in the wild. The human keepers taught the chicks how to be whooping cranes.

In the early 1990s, the first chicks raised by humans in costumes were taken to central Florida and set free. They successfully mated and produced a wild whooping crane chick in 2000. Then they had to teach the chicks how to migrate from Florida to Wisconsin for the summer – a 1,900-kilometre journey.

The team worked with Operation Migration. Volunteers trained the chicks to follow an ultralight aircraft driven by a pilot wearing the crane costume. Farmers offered safe places to sleep on the way. It was a lot of effort. But today the numbers of whooping crane numbers have risen to 826: they are still endangered but not critically. Their story could be a success if we can conserve their wetlands habitat.

2/ In 1998 the police in Colombia asked Ivan Lonzano, director of Bogotá's wildlife rescue centre, to go to the airport. The police had found two boxes that were going to Europe. Inside were nearly 800 very colourful poison dart frogs. Many of the species were endangered and most of the frogs were dead or dying. This shock made Lonzano start the conservation that nearly lost all his money and almost ended his marriage.

Colombia has 734 frog species. 160 are critically endangered. But international frog collectors and traffickers do not care. Lonzano had the idea to start a legal trade of poison frogs that were bred in captivity (they lose their poison in captivity but they still have exotic colours). He hoped this would make the prices go down so not so many people would take the wild frogs illegally. It took years to learn how to breed the frogs and to convince the Colombian government to allow him to export them legally.

Now it's beginning to work. Collectors like this legal way to get frogs and prices are much lower. This stops the traffickers. Lonzano says that many of the collectors have successfully bred frogs from his frogs, and sold them, and this makes the prices even lower. His next step is to breed frogs and set them free in the wild.

3/ For more than 30 years, people have been trying very hard to stop the shy Sumatran rhino from going extinct. This rhino is often alone and makes a singing noise, so people call it 'the singing rhino'. There used to be a lot across Southeast Asia from Bhutan to Indonesia. But now there are only a few in the wild (between 30 to 80) in jungle in Sumatra and Borneo. Their habitat has been destroyed so the few rhinos left are separated. This has made them less resistant because of inbreeding and less genetic diversity.

People are now trying to save the habitat (but there is another threat from plans to build roads in Aceh province). Conservationists think the only chance of survival is to breed the rhinos in captivity. So, in 1984, they decided to capture some rhinos in the wild, keep them safe in captivity and try to increase numbers. But this was very difficult. 40 rhinos were first captured, but 13 of these died by 1990 because of disease, injury and the wrong diet (hay instead of the fresh vegetation they ate in the wild). Also, they had no babies. It looked like conservationists were helping this species to extinction.

Two Sumatran rhinos in the Cincinnati Zoo in the US had eye problems. The keepers discovered this was because of too much time in the sun – in the wild they are protected by trees. The zoo spent \$500,000 for special covers to provide shade.

The fertility problem was partly because females of this species only ovulate when males are present. Another problem was that if females didn't mate regularly, they developed uterine problems (cysts and growths) and if they didn't get pregnant and have babies often enough they quickly became infertile. There were many miscarriages with natural mating. The first calf was not born until 2001 and so far only two captive females, one in the US and another in Sumatra, have produced babies. This does not look good for the future as the small population in the wild does not produce enough babies.

They are now trying IVF techniques using surrogate mothers. They need to capture more animals. It is very difficult to take the eggs from rhinos because of their anatomy – a mistake could cut an important blood vessel. If they succeed, the Sumatran rhino will, in future only be a captive species, because its wild home is disappearing.

# Focus on grammar - the passive – match the missing verbs and turn them into past participles:

- The first crane chicks raised by humans in costumes were ...1... to central Florida and ...2... free
  - Lonzano had the idea to start a legal trade of poison frogs that were ...3... in captivity
  - The habitat of the rhinos has been ...4...
  - 40 rhinos were first ...5...
  - In the wild rhino's eyes are ...6... by trees
  - The first captive rhino calf was not ...7... until 2001
- a) to breed
  - b) to destroy
  - c) to capture
  - d) to take
  - e) to bear
  - f) to set
  - g) to protect

Key:

- The first crane chicks raised by humans in costumes were **1/ taken** to central Florida and **2/ set** free
- Lonzano had the idea to start a legal trade of poison frogs that were **3/bred** in captivity
- The habitat of the rhinos has been **4/destroyed**
- 40 rhinos were first **5/captured**
- In the wild rhino's eyes are **6/protected** by trees
- The first captive rhino calf was not **7/born** until 2001

- a) to breed
- b) to destroy
- c) to capture
- d) to take
- e) to bear
- f) to set
- g) to protect

**HOW MANY IRREGULAR VERBS AND HOW MANY DIFFERENT PASSIVE TENSES HERE?**

# Passive review:

## Irregular verbs:

to breed - bred

to take - taken

to bear - born

to set – set

**How can you learn the irregular past participles?**

## Passive tenses – match:

a) Present simple passive:

b) Past simple passive

c) Present perfect passive

1/ they **were bred** in captivity

2/ the habitat **has been destroyed**

3/ their eyes **are protected**

**NB. Be careful with bear / born:**

**I was born**

# Vocabulary: how many of these words related to animals do you know?

- crane
- to breed
- incubator
- endangered
- trafficker
- nest
- keeper
- to hunt

- wasp
- aphid
- grasshopper
- caterpillar
- extinct / extinction
- conservationist
- habitat
- fertility
- mating



# Animal words - match:

1. crane
2. to breed
3. incubator
4. endangered
5. trafficker
6. wasp
7. aphid
8. grasshopper
9. caterpillar

a) to have babies (animals), or for humans to keep animals to reproduce

b) at serious risk of extinction

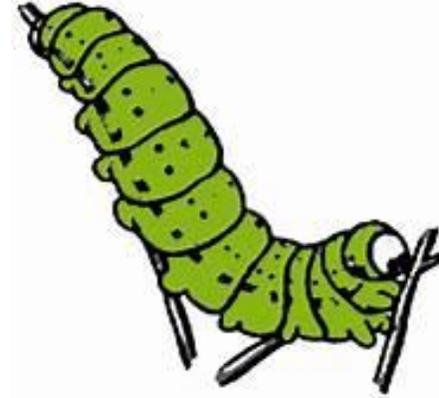
c) a warm box to look after babies born too early

d) someone who sells something illegal

e)



f)



g)



h)



i)



# KEY:

1. crane **e**
2. to breed **a**
3. incubator **c**
4. endangered **b**
5. trafficker **d**
6. wasp **g**
7. aphid **h**
8. grasshopper **i**
9. caterpillar **f**

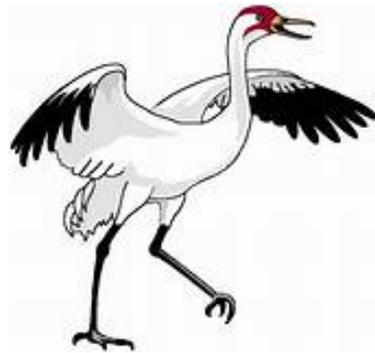
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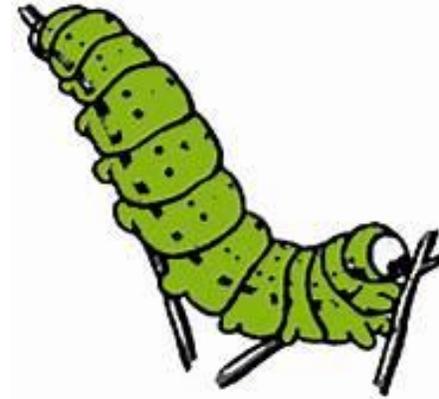
c) a warm box to look after babies born too early

d) someone who sells something illegal

e)



f)



g)



h)



i)



Do you like wasps? Why / why not?



If a wasp could talk, what do you think it would say?

Write 3 sentences: “I am a wasp. I am important because ....”

Now read what the wasp  
says on the next 2 slides

Find 5 reasons why the wasp  
is important to humans

I am important to you because I am one of most important controllers of pests in nature. I am a hunter. I hunt the spiders that terrify you in the rainforests of Northern Australia. In the dry grasslands of Africa, I eat the flies that carry your diseases. In the fields of England, I hunt the insects that destroy the flowers you love. I am important because without me, wherever you are in the world, you could have far too many flies, spiders, locusts, caterpillars and grasshoppers. And for you who live in the suburbs, I look after your backyard: I eat the aphids as they kill your tomato plants, I hunt the caterpillars as they eat other plants.

I am important to you, the crop farmer, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. I am part of your solution to growing food for your family, to help you live. You may not know this yet: I will help make your agriculture sustainable. You know that those chemicals you spray on your crops are bad for your own health and for nature. I understand, this is survival: your family, your children need that crop to grow, not to be eaten by caterpillars. I can help. I do help when you don't notice me. Let me do my work: let me eat those fat worms from your crops. Let me feed my babies so you can feed yours. I help when I no one sees me; I live with you but no one knows. If you find me, you kill me. I understand why. Next time: don't! Let us live: we're on your side. Work with us, not against us. Use us. We help each other.

I am important because we wasps are strong. We do not fear you. This annoys you. We do not mind all the noises you make. We use your lights to find our food at night. Thank you. We notice the chemicals that you spray around like cheap perfume, and some of us die. But we are strong in numbers and we feed on many different things so we don't usually only eat in one place that is full of toxins. You took away some of our natural nests of the past, but you have given us new nests: your loft or shed are excellent places for our many babies. You hate us because we are so good at surviving.

Some wasps work like a machine. I am important even though I am a tiny part of the machine. You made factories that eat the planet's resources. This is your success. And your failure. Well done. But we wasps did this millions of years before you. We created the perfect factory line over millions of years of evolution. You can learn a lot from us, if you take the time to watch. We are a superorganism. We are like your largest factories, cities and societies with the way we work together and divide labour.

I am important because I am not a bee, but I am the original bee. The bees are my descendants, and they have forgotten how to hunt. They are a vegetarian version of me. In evolution, some of us lost their taste for meat, their babies started to eat pollen and nectar from flowers, and the bee was born. But there are a lot more of us: for every bee species, there are at least five different wasp species. But you do not like us. You love our cousins, you plant special flowers and even make special houses for them. You do this because you understand and value their usefulness to you, your society, your wellbeing, your food. But wasps were pollinating plants millions of years before the bees: today, we are important to more than 700 species of plants from more than 100 families. Some plants, like orchids, depend on us, not bees, for reproduction. They have evolved to attract us and we fly in and get covered with pollen. We pollinate. But remember this: bees pollinate because we pollinate. Bees, as our descendants, inherited our need to visit flowers for sugar; they developed a new use for the pollen from flowers, to feed their babies. Thank us for the pollinators you love.

I am important to people who will get cancer because of the chemicals I produce. My poison has many toxins, allergens, enzymes and amines. Evolution has given me this pharmacy toolkit. Some wasps use these chemicals to stun insects so their babies can eat them when they are still alive; some wasps use these toxins to defend their homes. I make a strong toxin called a mastoparan – it explodes cell walls and kills cells. I make this to defend myself and my society. You are learning to use the power of my toxins; my mastoparans are more toxic to cancer cells than normal cells. I am very important to you, the future cancer patient.

I am important to you all because I am a wasp.

# Now choose another animal and write what that animal would say:

You can choose the whooping crane, the Sumatran rhino, the poison dart frogs, or any other animal:

1. do some research to find the facts
2. write 100 – 200 words, but don't include the name of the animal
3. proof-read carefully
4. read or show your writing to others to see if they can guess which animal it is



# Homework:

Go to: <https://eewiki.newint.org/>

Search 'animals' in the search box (top right)

Choose some articles to read

