

Support Materials for Endangered Species 360: ZooBoise Tour

Objective: The learner will identify the major causes of animal endangerment and discuss the role of zoos in species conservation.

Background Reading:

If an animal species becomes extinct, it is gone from the earth forever. To prevent that from happening, scientists look at the number of species members in a particular area and compare the numbers over time. If too many members of one species are lost and their numbers get severely low, or if conditions make it hard for survival of a species over time, they are considered endangered. As of October 2018, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists 2,412 plants and animals as threatened or endangered worldwide. Animals or plants that are considered to be endangered have the possibility of becoming extinct and need immediate attention and protection.

There are many reasons that animals become endangered. One of the most common reasons is habitat loss. When humans move into a species' habitat, activities such as building, farming, or ranching may impact the animals' sources of food, water, and shelter and their numbers may decrease. Other causes include hunting, water diversion, the pet trade, pollution, pesticides, inbreeding with domestic animals, introduction of non-native species, and removal for medical research. When one species is endangered, food chains and food webs involving other species are also impacted.

Zoos can help protect endangered species in several ways. They educate people about endangered animals and teach them how to protect animals. They raise money to help protect species in the wild. Some zoos have captive breeding programs where they try to help increase the species' numbers.

Learn more at <https://sciencetrek.org/topics/endangered-species>

Discussion Questions:

- What are some examples of animals that are critically endangered?
- Why is it difficult for scientists to study some endangered species, such as the snow leopard?
- What are some of the major reasons animals become endangered?
- How do zoos help in the conservation of animal species?