

# To Preserve or To Destroy?

(From an article in *Wildlife*, Wonder World Encyclopedias)

Every form of human activity upsets or changes the wild life complex of the area unceasingly and unavoidably. Man has destroyed many forms of wild life for no reasonable purpose. Small sections of the community, for their own narrow, selfish ends, have destroyed many things of general interest. Expediency has often led man to make grave blunders in land use, habitat destruction, and the extermination of many forms of wild life. 5

In his everyday life, man's attitude is determined in the main by purely practical considerations; ethical or moral considerations come afterwards. Looked at in this way, the disappearance from Britain of such animals as the wolf and wild boar can be more easily understood. In our intensively cultivated and over-populated country there was no room for such large mammals, the one a predator of big livestock and the other a pest to agriculture. Thus man's first attitude to animals is the result of their effect on his own survival, or what he considers to be their effect on his survival. 10

Then there is his concern with sport. The animals he sets aside for this purpose are given special protection and war is waged unceasingly on any other creatures that may be a danger to them. This creates many problems and man has made serious errors in his destruction of predators. Until recent years all hawks and falcons were destroyed as "vermin" by game preservers. This meant the destruction of kestrels, which are useful to the farmer; it meant the destruction of owls, which are useful to the farmer; so here you had sport acting against the interests of food production. The tragedy of all this is that all the killing of predators did not in any way improve man's sport. It has been clearly shown by modern research that eagles, hawks, falcons and predatory mammals have not the slightest effect 20  
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on the numbers of game birds anywhere.

Broadly speaking, man wages war against the creatures which he considers harmful, even when his warfare makes little or no difference to the numbers of his enemies. And he encourages those creatures which are useful, even though their attacks on pests make little difference to the numbers of those pests. It would be true to say, therefore, that our attitude to song-birds, to most birds of prey and to many of our predatory animals, arises from the fact that they have either been proved useful or of no consequence. Either way, from this, we have developed the idea of conservation which means preserving what we have left of our heritage of wild life and even finding room for rarities which may do a little damage on the side. 30  
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## A Meaning in context

1. Explain clearly what is meant by the words in bold print in each sentence.

- (a) Every form of human activity **upsets** or changes the wild life **complex** of the area unceasingly and **unavoidably**.
- (b) Small sections of the community, for their own **narrow, selfish ends**, have destroyed many things **of general interest**.
- (c) **Expediency** has often led man to make grave blunders in land use.
- (d) In his everyday life, man's attitude is determined in the main by purely **practical considerations; ethical or moral considerations** come afterwards.
- (e) Man's attitude to some animals and birds arises from the fact that they have either been proved useful or **of no consequence**.
- (f) The idea of conservation means preserving what we have left of **our heritage of wild life** and even **finding room for rarities** which may do a little damage on the side.

2. Give a synonym for each word as it is used in the passage.

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| (a) reasonable (l. 3)    | (f) effect (l. 14)     |
| (b) extermination (l. 6) | (g) concern (l. 15)    |
| (c) understood (l. 10)   | (h) Broadly (l. 27)    |
| (d) room (l. 11)         | (i) encourages (l. 29) |
| (e) result (l. 13)       | (j) true (l. 31)       |

## B In each case, choose the best answer.

1. The writer thinks that every form of human activity
- A is bound to interfere with the life and interrelationships of all the wild animals in the area.
- B is bound to result in the extinction of all the plants and animals in the area.
- C will eventually lead to serious mistakes in land use.
- D illustrates man's selfishness and thoughtlessness.
2. The main point made in the first paragraph is that
- A man is a creature of expediency.
- B man is basically selfish in his attitude to wild life.
- C man's various activities have harmed the environment and caused the destruction of many forms of wild life.
- D all wild life face extermination because of man.

3. Man's attitude to animals is governed mainly by
  - A his moral principles.
  - B his fear and distrust of various animals.
  - C agricultural and population considerations.
  - D the effect any particular animal has on his own survival.
  
4. "the one" in line 12 refers to
  - A big livestock.
  - B large mammals.
  - C the wolf.
  - D the wild boar.
  
5. In the third paragraph, "vermin" refers specifically to
  - A hawks and falcons.
  - B kestrels and owls.
  - C game animals and birds.
  - D all predators.
  
6. Pick out the true statement from the four given.
  - A The killing of predators has improved man's sport.
  - B Birds of prey control the numbers of game birds in existence.
  - C Man's destruction of predators has had some bad effects on his food production.
  - D The numbers of game birds anywhere are affected by predatory mammals.
  
7. In his concern with sport, man has given special favourable consideration to
  - A game birds and animals.
  - B wolves and wild boars.
  - C kestrels and owls.
  - D vermin.
  
8. If an animal or bird is of "no consequence" to man, it is likely to be
  - A preserved.
  - B ignored or even destroyed.
  - C a game bird or animal.
  - D given special protection.
  
9. "the idea of conservation" has for its objective
  - A the preservation of wild life.
  - B the extermination of wild life.

- C the study of wild life.
- D the hunting of wild life.

10. Which of these statements is correct?
- A Man ceases to wage war against harmful creatures if he finds his efforts do not reduce their numbers.
  - B Man encourages creatures which are useful only when they reduce the numbers of harmful animals.
  - C Because so few wild creatures are left, man wishes to preserve all sorts of animals, whether they are useful or not.
  - D Man wishes to exterminate harmful creatures and preserve only those which are useful.

### C Summary

Using the information given in the passage, write a paragraph of about 150 words on the factors governing the relationship between man and animals. You are advised to use your own words as far as possible.

### D For further work and discussion

1. "Man is the most adaptable of all animals and the most able to colonize almost any type of habitat, from the Arctic to the Equator." What makes man so? Share your ideas with the class.
2. "The simple physical act of farming disrupts a habitat." Show how this is done. Are all the effects bad? Support your answer.
3. "Expediency has often led man to make grave blunders in land use, habitat destruction, and the extermination of many forms of wild life." Give some illustrations of this by referring to case histories around the world. (Some research is necessary.)