



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## What are Endangered Species?

Earth is ancient. Creatures have been evolving for billions of years. As the Earth's climate changes naturally over time, different species evolve that are better suited to the new conditions. Those creatures that do not have the adaptations to survive the new climate become extinct.

The Earth continues to go through natural changes and its climate does change over time. It is expected that species without the "right stuff" to survive new conditions will become extinct.

However, the Earth is now experiencing an extinction rate much higher than what should be expected. Humans are making changes to their environment that are speeding up extinctions at an alarming rate. Clearing land for farms and cities eliminates animal and plant habitats. Factories, automobiles and power plants release pollution into the air and water that poisons millions of creatures. Herbicides and pesticides used by farms and homes kill or damage millions more. Illegal hunting and poaching have resulted in the extinction of many species — think the Dodo bird of the island of Mauritius, east of Madagascar and North America's Passenger Pigeon — and have reduced thousands more to dangerously small numbers.

Humans need to make drastic lifestyle changes to slow extinction rates. There are far too many endangered species very close to becoming extinct. What would you do to make sure your kids will still be able to experience dolphins and tigers in the wild?

1. Why are extinctions a natural part of the Earth's evolution? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is true about the present rate of extinction? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. List 4 reasons the rate of extinction is accelerating?
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. \_\_\_\_\_
  - iv. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Can you think of other reasons the extinction rate has changed NOT listed in this reading? \_\_\_\_\_
5. List 2 extinct species. i. \_\_\_\_\_ ii. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Define "endangered species". \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. List 2 species that are endangered.
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_