

Formosa Bear Conservation

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

The Formosan black bear, Taiwan's only native bear species, is instantly recognizable by the distinctive V-shaped white **patch** across its chest. Inhabiting the rugged mountain forests above 1,000 meters, this elusive omnivore plays a crucial ecological role by dispersing seeds and maintaining the health of subtropical ecosystems. Despite its cultural significance as a national symbol, fewer than 600 individuals are believed to remain in the wild.

Habitat loss represents the most pressing threat to the species. Decades of logging, agricultural expansion, and road construction have severely **fragmented** the bears' territory, isolating populations and reducing genetic diversity. Furthermore, illegal hunting and the use of snares intended for other animals frequently result in maimed or killed bears, with many survivors losing limbs to these indiscriminate traps.

Conservation efforts intensified significantly after researcher Hwang Mei-hsiu pioneered systematic studies in the 1990s. Her groundbreaking work in Yushan National Park involved radio-collaring bears and meticulously documenting their behavior, providing the first reliable data on population dynamics. Her findings galvanized public concern and prompted government agencies to allocate substantial resources toward **mitigation** strategies.

Today, a network of organizations collaborates to protect the species through habitat restoration, anti-poaching patrols, and community education programs. The Taiwan Black Bear Conservation Association engages indigenous communities, whose ancestral knowledge proves invaluable for monitoring remote terrain. Researchers also rehabilitate injured bears, with several successful releases demonstrating that captive individuals can **adapt** to the wilderness when properly conditioned.

Nevertheless, challenges persist. Climate change is altering the distribution of essential food sources such as acorns and bamboo shoots, while infrastructure projects continue to encroach upon protected zones. Sustained funding, stricter law enforcement, and genuine public engagement remain **imperative** if Taiwan hopes to preserve this iconic species for future generations. The Formosan black bear's survival ultimately reflects the nation's broader commitment to biodiversity and environmental stewardship.

A. Vocabulary

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. patch ____ | a. absolutely necessary or extremely important |
| 2. elusive ____ | b. adjust to new conditions or environments |
| 3. fragmented ____ | c. done without careful judgment or distinction between targets |
| 4. indiscriminate ____ | d. responsible management and care of something entrusted to one |
| 5. mitigation ____ | e. difficult to find, catch, or observe |
| 6. galvanized ____ | f. broken into separate, disconnected pieces |
| 7. adapt ____ | g. action of reducing the severity or harmfulness of something |
| 8. encroach ____ | h. shocked or excited people into taking action |
| 9. imperative ____ | i. intrude gradually on someone's territory or rights |
| 10. stewardship ____ | j. small area that differs from what surrounds it |

B. True or False

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. The Formosan black bear is identified by a V-shaped white patch on its chest. | <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Fewer than 600 Formosan black bears are believed to remain in the wild. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. The Formosan black bear is a strict carnivore that hunts large prey. | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Habitat fragmentation has reduced the genetic diversity of bear populations. |

- ___ 5. Snares set for other animals never injure Formosan black bears.
- ___ 6. Hwang Mei-hsiu began systematic studies of the species in the 1970s.
- ___ 7. Indigenous communities contribute valuable knowledge to monitoring efforts.
- ___ 8. No rehabilitated bears have ever been successfully released back into the wild.
- ___ 9. Climate change is affecting the availability of acorns and bamboo shoots.
- ___ 10. The bear typically lives in coastal lowland areas of Taiwan.

C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: elusive, fragmented, mitigation, galvanized, imperative, encroach, stewardship, indiscriminate

1. The bear is highly _____, making it extremely difficult for researchers to observe in the wild.
2. Logging and road construction have _____ the bears' mountain habitat into isolated patches.
3. Hwang Mei-hsiu's research _____ the public and pushed the government to fund conservation.
4. Sustained funding and stricter enforcement are _____ for the species' long-term survival.
5. New infrastructure projects continue to _____ upon legally protected zones.



D. Comprehension Questions

1. What are the two main human-caused threats to the Formosan black bear described in the passage?
2. Why is Hwang Mei-hsiu considered an important figure in Formosan black bear conservation?
3. How do indigenous communities contribute to current conservation efforts?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Should governments prioritize protecting a single iconic species like the Formosan black bear, or focus resources on entire ecosystems? Why?
2. What responsibilities, if any, do ordinary citizens have in protecting endangered wildlife in their country?

Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-j, 2-e, 3-f, 4-c, 5-g, 6-h, 7-b, 8-i, 9-a, 10-d

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-F, 6-F, 7-T, 8-F, 9-T, 10-F

C. Fill Blanks: 1-elusive, 2-fragmented, 3-galvanized, 4-imperative, 5-encroach

D. Comprehension:

1. Habitat loss from logging, agriculture, and roads, and illegal hunting or injury from snares set for other animals.
2. She pioneered systematic radio-collar studies in the 1990s that produced the first reliable population data and inspired public and government action.
3. Their ancestral knowledge of remote mountain terrain makes them invaluable partners for monitoring bear populations.

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