
Amazing discoveries

WORKSHEET A

Anyone who has seen TV reports about the natural world knows that they often bring bad news. Sometimes, for example, they tell us about the many animal species that are endangered (which means they are in danger of becoming extinct) because of things humans are doing. Because of illegal hunting, for example, there are only a few thousand tigers and rhinoceroses left in the world. Elephants are also endangered, not only because of illegal hunting but also because the increasing human population in the parts of the world where they live is reducing their habitat. In fact, about 25% of all the world's mammals are endangered.

Recently, however, there was good news about the amazing number of 'new' animal species in New Guinea. (The world's second-largest island, New Guinea is in the southwest Pacific Ocean, to the north of Australia. About half the island is the country of Papua New Guinea and the rest is part of Indonesia.) A new species means one that no scientist knew about before, and between 1998 and 2008, scientists working in New Guinea found more than a thousand of them. More than half were invertebrates (many of them very small) but there were also 134 amphibians, 71 fish, 43 reptiles, 12 mammals and two birds.

Even though the jungles and mountains of New Guinea make some areas difficult to travel to, the large size of a few of the new animals – for example a 2.5-metre shark that lives in some of the island's rivers – makes it a bit surprising that scientists had never noticed them before.

Sometimes the scientists didn't have to look very far to find a new animal: one team got out of a helicopter and in less than one minute discovered a new bird. Watching it, a species of honeyeater, they soon found one of the reasons why it had been unknown: unlike almost any other bird, it doesn't seem to sing and is very quiet.

Many of the new species are very colourful, such as an orange snail, a black and turquoise lizard, and a rainbow fish that, as its name suggests, has many different colours.

The discoveries show that New Guinea has lots of strange and wonderful wildlife, with many species that do not live anywhere else in the world, and that even as the wild areas of the world get smaller, nature can still surprise and amaze us.

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Exercise 1

Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F), or if the text doesn't say (D).

1. New Guinea is an island.
2. The scientists didn't discover any new species of mammal in New Guinea.
3. The scientists discovered a total of around 600 new animal species in New Guinea.
4. Tigers are an endangered species.
5. The team of scientists first saw the new species of honeyeater from inside their helicopter.
6. There are no tigers or rhinoceroses in New Guinea.
7. More than half of the new animal species that the scientists found were invertebrates.
8. More than half the world's mammals are endangered.
9. Some of New Guinea is part of Australia.
10. The 2.5-metre shark was the largest animal the scientists discovered.

Exercise 2

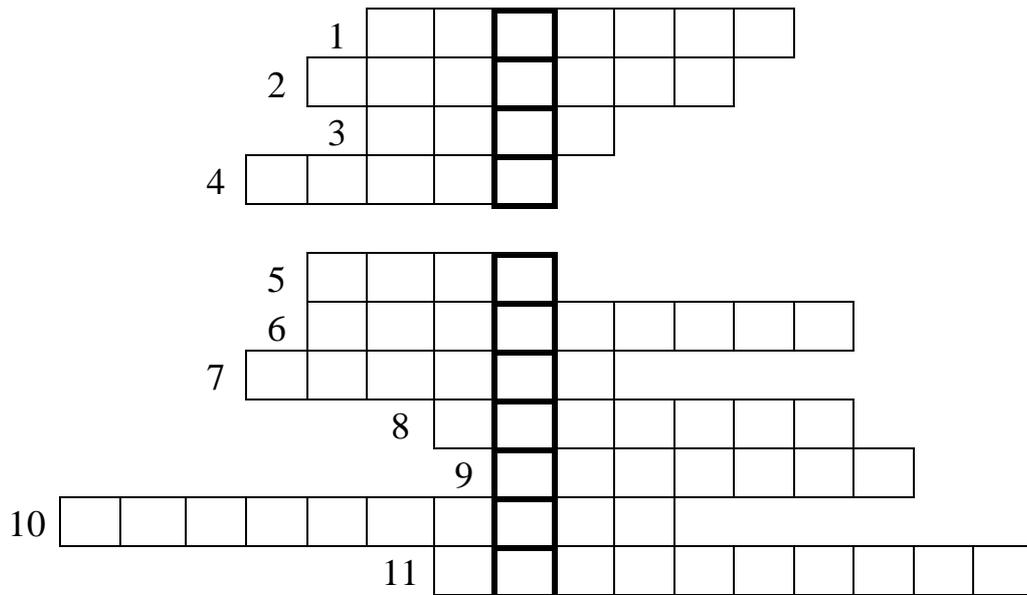
Answer the questions about the text on Worksheet A.

1. Why are some areas of New Guinea difficult to travel to?
2. What is one of the reasons no one had noticed the new species of honeyeater before?
3. Where does the 2.5-metre shark live?
4. What are the two reasons why the world's elephants are endangered?
5. What is the name of the half of New Guinea that is not part of Indonesia?
6. What is the reason for the name 'rainbow fish'?
7. What is it about a few of New Guinea's new animal species that makes it quite surprising that no scientists had known about them before?
8. Why have tigers and rhinoceroses become endangered species?

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Exercise 3

Complete the crossword below. If all the words are correct, another colourful animal discovered in New Guinea (or to be precise, in the sea to the south of the island) will read from top to bottom.



1. The black and turquoise lizard was one of the new species of _____ the scientists discovered.
2. Tigers are in danger of becoming _____.
3. The new species of honeyeater doesn't seem to _____.
4. The large _____ the scientists discovered lives in rivers, not the sea.
5. The _____ areas of the world are getting smaller.
6. Some of New Guinea is part of the country _____.
7. _____ and mountain areas of New Guinea are difficult to travel to.
8. One team of scientists soon found a new _____ of honeyeater.
9. Because of the increasing human population, elephants are losing their _____.
10. Because of its size, it is _____ no scientist had discovered the 2.5-metre river shark before.
11. Like tigers, rhinoceroses are also _____.