

Grade 4 Sample Passage and Multiple Choice Questions

Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 7 through 12.

Saving Snow Leopards

by Pamela Crowe

“Mountain Ghost”

- 1 The snow leopard is rarely seen by humans. This mysterious cat lives in 12 Asian countries among the world’s tallest mountains.
- 2 The snow leopard is smaller than the tiger, the lion, and the leopard of Africa and Asia. It weighs as much as a cheetah, but is shorter and stockier. The cat’s compact shape and thick fur help keep it warm in glacier-chilled air. Dark markings dapple its light-gray coat, camouflaging it in rocky terrain. Big paws make padding over snow easier. An extra-long tail provides balance on steep, rugged ground.
- 3 You might think the snow leopard would be safe living in such harsh, remote places. But it faces multiple threats from humans. The cat has lost important stretches of habitat. (A habitat is the place that fills an animal’s needs—mainly food, shelter, and mates.) Mining, wars, and overgrazing by farm animals have all led to this loss of habitat.

Protecting the Herd

- 4 The loss of habitat has caused a food shortage. Snow leopards eat wild goats and sheep. When farm animals eat too much vegetation, wild plant eaters can’t find enough food to stay healthy. Females don’t have enough babies. Over time, the numbers of wild goats and sheep go down, and snow leopards have less to eat. Then the big cats eat livestock, and the herders kill the leopards to protect their livelihoods.
- 5 Agencies are working to save the cats and help herders at the same time. Some agencies give herders wire mesh and wood to keep snow leopards from entering their stables at night. Some pay herders for the animals they lose to snow leopards. In exchange, the herders stop killing snow leopards and leave more room and plants for the wild goats and sheep.

- 6 Are the conservation programs working? Researchers estimate that only 3,500 to 7,500 snow leopards are alive today. But they need more reliable ways to count leopards before they will know.
- 7 That’s where scientists like Dr. Kyle McCarthy are needed. He traveled to Kyrgyzstan to test ways of estimating snow leopard numbers. He camped in the mountains with Dr. Jennifer McCarthy (his wife) and other co-workers. They saw no leopards, but they hadn’t expected to. Instead, they looked for evidence the cats left behind. “You have to find something related to them: poops, scrapes (claw marks), and pee,” Dr. Kyle McCarthy says.
- 8 The group collected scat (poop) for DNA analysis. Along with the waste material of digestion, scat contains cells from the animal’s own body. DNA is material inside those cells that, like fingerprints, can identify an individual animal.
- 9 The team also used automatic cameras. The scientists placed motion-and-heat-sensitive cameras along a mountain ridge. When a snow leopard neared one of these “camera traps,” the camera snapped its picture.
- 10 Each snow leopard’s spot pattern is different. Researchers compared patterns in the photos to identify cats. The cameras had taken photos of 15 different snow leopards at two study sites.

A Close Encounter

- 11 Shannon Kachel, Dr. Kyle McCarthy’s graduate assistant, has searched for snow leopards in Tajikistan, where he almost saw one. “I was hiking along a ridgeline in the late afternoon and came around the corner of a rock outcropping to find a steaming, fresh kill site with snow leopard signs all round,” Kachel says. “I could see and hear where the cat had knocked some rocks loose as it ran away from me, but even though I waited until it was nearly dark, I never saw the cat.”

12 “Most people will never see a snow leopard, yet it has a right to exist,” Dr. Kyle McCarthy says. “It’s too magnificent to think about losing.”

THREATS TO SNOW LEOPARDS	
Illegal hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Snow leopards are hunted for their fur and bones.
Loss of habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People and livestock move into snow leopard range.
Loss of prey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer prey are available to snow leopards when wild sheep and goats are hunted.• Livestock compete with the wild sheep and goats for food and the number of wild animals is reduced.
Killed by herders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sheep and goat herders kill the leopards when the leopards eat livestock.
Lack of effective protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The areas in which the snow leopards live are too large to protect.• Many countries cannot afford to pay for protection.
Lack of awareness and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Herders do not understand the importance of snow leopards to the ecosystem.

7 What does the word “conservation” mean as it is used in paragraph 6?

- A action
- B education
- C preparation
- D protection

8 How does paragraph 9 connect to paragraph 6 in the article?

- A by describing a method for counting snow leopards
- B by describing what it is like to see a snow leopard
- C by explaining why snow leopards are rarely seen by humans
- D by explaining how scientists identify individual snow leopards

9 Which idea **best** explains why Dr. McCarthy and his co-workers traveled to Kyrgyzstan?

- A “The loss of habitat has caused a food shortage.” (paragraph 4)
- B “But they need more reliable ways to count leopards before they will know.” (paragraph 6)
- C “They saw no leopards, but they hadn’t expected to.” (paragraph 7)
- D “Researchers compared patterns in the photos to identify cats.” (paragraph 10)

GO ON

- 10 Which idea from the article **best** supports the main idea?
- A “The snow leopard is smaller than the tiger, the lion, and the leopard of Africa and Asia.” (paragraph 2)
 - B “Researchers estimate that only 3,500 to 7,500 snow leopards are alive today.” (paragraph 6)
 - C “Each snow leopard’s spot pattern is different.” (paragraph 10)
 - D “The cameras had taken photos of 15 different snow leopards at two study sites.” (paragraph 10)
- 11 How is the article **mainly** organized?
- A compare and contrast
 - B sequence of events
 - C question then answer
 - D cause and effect
- 12 How does the table at the end of “Saving Snow Leopards” support the main idea of the article?
- A by showing reasons why snow leopards are struggling to survive
 - B by listing ways to better protect snow leopards
 - C by presenting new information about the habitat of snow leopards
 - D by providing evidence that there are fewer snow leopards alive now than in the past