

What is an endangered species?

In order to answer that question you need to know what a species is. A species is a group of living things that have similar characteristics (they resemble each other and have similar genes) and that can reproduce together.

Species can become extinct like the ancient dinosaurs, which means that they all died out. Before a species becomes extinct we now have special names to describe how likely it is that the species may disappear. If a species is endangered it is in serious danger.

An endangered species is a species that has shrunk to such small numbers due to natural or man made changes in its environment, that it may soon become extinct in the wild. There are also threatened species and species of special concern. A threatened species is a species likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future within all or a significant part of the area where it lives. Threatened species are monitored for changes in population. A species of special concern is a species declining in population or range at a rate that could lead to being listed as endangered or threatened.

Montana has several endangered or threatened animal species including whooping cranes, grizzly bears, black footed ferrets and more. To see the full list and find out what species are endangered in each state visit www.fws.gov/endangered.

During the spring of 2012, a team of climbers including an MSU scientist and several Montanans will be attempting to climb Mount Everest on the Everest Education Expedition. The team will be passing through the territories of lots of endangered animals on their journey. Try the activity below to learn more about some of the animals they might see. Your class can track the progress of the climbers and explore the science of the region as the team sets out to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first American ascent of Everest. Follow along and join the adventure. Visit www.montana.edu/everest to learn more.

You can also learn more about the endangered animals of the Mount Everest region by printing out your own set of species cards at www.montana.edu/everest/resources/lessons.htm.

Go to lesson 6 and download the species cards.



Try this!

The animals below are all from the Himalayan Mountains near Mount Everest. Match each species of Himalayan animal listed below to the fact that describes it and to the tracks it makes.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Bengal Tiger
endangered
track ____ | <input type="radio"/> Yak
vulnerable
track ____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Snow Leopard
endangered
track ____ | <input type="radio"/> Himalayan Black Bear
vulnerable
track ____ |

1. The bile (a fluid made by the liver and stored in the gallbladder that helps with digestion) of this animal is often used in traditional Chinese medicines.

2. When this animal makes its loudest noises, the sound can be heard up to two miles (3k) away.

3. This animal has an extra set of ribs to protect the large lungs it needs to live at high altitudes with very little oxygen.

4. This animal can jump as far as 50 feet (15 m).



Bengal Tiger (2, A), Yak (3, B), Snow Leopard (4, C), Himalayan Black Bear - (1, D)

