

## Galapagos tortoises out of danger

1st November, 2014



Giant Galapagos tortoises used to be a symbol for endangered animals. In the 1960s, there were just 15 of the animals in existence.

They were dying out because wild goats were eating their food and damaging their habitat. This caused conservationists to take action to help them. Forty years later, the tortoises are doing well. There are over 1,000 of them living and breeding in the wild. Scientists say it is a conservation success story. Conservationist James Gibb said: "What we basically found over time is that about half of the tortoises that were released have survived." Mr Gibb added: "That's actually pretty amazing." Gibb said the tortoises can now survive without human help.

Giant tortoises used to live all over the world. People hunted them and destroyed their habitat, so they almost became extinct. Giant tortoise numbers fell from over 250,000 in the 16th century to just a few thousand in the 1970s. Giant tortoises can weigh up to 250 kg and can live in the wild for over 100 years. One tortoise lived in captivity for more than 170 years. Wikipedia says: "Tortoises also live very uncomplicated lives, and can nap up to 16 hours a day." Mr Gibb said the conservation story in the Galapagos Islands would continue. Next year, a small island that lost all of its tortoises a few years ago, will get 200 tortoises. Gibb is looking forward to "another success".

Sources: *Mother Nature Network / Wikipedia / Time*

## Writing

Conservationists should focus on animals and not birds or fish. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*tortoises / symbol / dying out / habitat / conservationists / success story / survive / hunted / extinct / a few thousand / captivity / nap / uncomplicated / Galapagos Islands*

## True / False

- The article says tortoises were a symbol of the World Wildlife Fund. T / F
- There were just 15 giant Galapagos tortoises in the 1960s. T / F
- There are over 1,000 of the giant tortoises in the wild today. T / F
- A conservationist said the tortoises still need our help to survive. T / F
- There were a quarter of a million giant tortoises in the 1500s. T / F
- Giant tortoises often weigh over 300kg. T / F
- Giant tortoises can sleep for up to 16 hours a day. T / F
- A Galapagos island will soon get 400 tortoises. T / F

## Synonym Match

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. symbol        | a. ruined       |
| 2. dying out     | b. set free     |
| 3. habitat       | c. dropped      |
| 4. released      | d. confinement  |
| 5. pretty        | e. disappearing |
| 6. destroyed     | f. simple       |
| 7. fell          | g. environment  |
| 8. captivity     | h. quite        |
| 9. uncomplicated | i. go on        |
| 10. continue     | j. emblem       |

## Discussion – Student A

- How can we stop destroying the habitat of animals?
- How do you feel when an animal becomes extinct?
- What do you think of cloning to bring extinct animals back to life?
- What would it be like to live to 170 years old?
- Would you like to nap for 16 hours a day?
- What conservation success story would you like to see?
- What is your message for the 200 tortoises going to the small island?
- What questions would you like to ask the conservationists?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. tortoises used to be a symbol          | a. that were released     |
| 2. In the 1960s,                          | b. 1,000 of them          |
| 3. eating their food and                  | c. lives                  |
| 4. There are over                         | d. damaging their habitat |
| 5. about half of the tortoises            | e. became extinct         |
| 6. used to live                           | f. to 250 kg              |
| 7. they almost                            | g. for endangered animals |
| 8. Giant tortoises can weigh up           | h. "another success"      |
| 9. Tortoises also live very uncomplicated | i. there were just 15     |
| 10. Gibbs is looking forward to           | j. all over the world     |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of tortoises?
- What do you think of this story?
- What do you know about the Galapagos Islands?
- Do you think conservationists can save other animals?
- How do you think the conservationists saved the tortoises?
- What would it be like to be a conservationist?
- What are the differences between tortoises and turtles?
- When will all animals be able to survive without human help?

## Spelling

- a olybms for endangered animals
- eating their food and damaging their bhatati
- living and direngbe in the wild
- a nnsrvaotico success story
- half of the tortoises that were leesread
- vesviur without human help
- they almost became tnetcxi
- in the 16th rytceun
- Giant tortoises can egihw up to 250 kg
- One tortoise lived in ayvtpicti
- Tortoises also live very epmonudccalti lives
- a small naidsl

### Answers – Synonym Match

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

## Role Play

### Role A – Tortoises

You think most conservation money should be spent on tortoises. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why money should not go towards their animals. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): frogs, tuna or pandas.

### Role B – Frogs

You think most conservation money should be spent on frogs. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why money should not go towards their animals. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): tortoises, tuna or pandas.

### Role C – Tuna

You think most conservation money should be spent on tuna. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why money should not go towards their animals. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): pandas, tortoises or pandas.

### Role D – Pandas

You think most conservation money should be spent on pandas. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why money should not go towards their animals. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): tuna, frogs or tortoises.

## Speaking – Extinction

Rank these with your partner. Put the biggest reasons animals become extinct at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- climate change
- natural causes
- deforestation
- acid rain
- hunting
- disease
- invasive species
- poaching

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.