The animal kingdom

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 apex predator ____	**a** a predator at the top of the food chain with no natural predators of its own
2 keystone species ____	**b** a species whose presence has a disproportionately large effect on its ecosystem
3 symbiosis ____	**c** a close, mutually beneficial relationship between two different species
4 dormant ____	**d** inactive, especially during a period of reduced biological activity like hibernation
5 territorial dispute ____	**e** a conflict over control of an area between animals
6 mimicry ____	**f** the imitation of another organism's appearance for protection or advantage
7 dexterity ____	**g** skill and agility in physical movement, especially with limbs
8 social hierarchy ____	**h** a ranked social structure within an animal group
9 innate ____	**i** present from birth, not learned
10 vulnerable species ____	**j** a species facing a significant risk of decline in the near future

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For a predator at the top of the food chain: apex predator / minor scavenger.

2 For a species with disproportionate ecosystem impact: keystone species / negligible species.

3 For a mutually beneficial relationship between species: symbiosis / parasitism.

4 For inactive during hibernation: dormant / active.

5 For imitating another organism's appearance: mimicry / originality.

6 For a ranked social structure: social hierarchy / total equality.

7 For a trait present from birth: innate / learned.

8 For a species at significant risk of decline: vulnerable species / thriving species.

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3 **Complete the ecological collocations with one word.**

1 _____ predator (= at the top of the food chain)

2 _____ species (= disproportionate ecosystem effect)

3 a _____ relationship (= mutually beneficial between species)

4 lie _____ (= remain inactive, especially over winter)

5 protective _____ (= imitating another species' appearance)

6 a social _____ (= a ranked group structure)

7 _____ behaviour (= present from birth, not learned)

8 a _____ species (= at risk of decline)

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4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

apex predator | dexterity | dormant | innate | keystone species | mimicry | social hierarchy | symbiosis | territorial dispute | vulnerable species

Case A: Researchers confirmed the wolf functions as an 1 _____ in the region, and also as a 2 _____, since its presence indirectly shapes vegetation patterns across the ecosystem.
Case B: The relationship between the clownfish and the anemone is a classic example of 3 _____, benefiting both species.
Case C: The insect's remarkable 4 _____ allows it to closely resemble a leaf, avoiding predators.
Case D: The primate troop maintains a strict 5 _____, with dominant individuals controlling access to food.
Case E: Two males engaged in a serious 6 _____ over breeding rights within the group.
Case F: Some behaviours appear to be 7 _____ rather than learned, present even in animals raised without parental contact.
Case G: The species remains 8 _____, with numbers declining steadily due to habitat loss.
Case H: Certain reptiles become 9 _____ during colder months, conserving energy until conditions improve, while their remarkable 10 _____ allows precise climbing even at low temperatures.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

The hidden importance of keystone species

Ecologists use the term keystone species to describe organisms whose removal from an ecosystem triggers effects far exceeding what their numbers alone would suggest. Sea otters, for example, control sea urchin populations that would otherwise devastate kelp forests, meaning the loss of a relatively small predator population can cascade into dramatic habitat collapse. This concept has reshaped conservation priorities, since protecting a keystone species can preserve an entire ecosystem more efficiently than attempting to protect every individual species separately. Critics note, however, that identifying keystone species reliably requires extensive ecological study, and that overly simplistic single-species conservation strategies risk overlooking equally important but less visible ecological relationships.

1 What does the term keystone species describe? _____

2 What example is given of a keystone species? _____

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3 What can the loss of a relatively small predator population cause? _____

4 How has this concept reshaped conservation priorities? _____

5 What do critics note about identifying keystone species reliably? _____

6 What risk do overly simplistic single-species strategies carry? _____

6 Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.

1 The wolf sits at the very top of the food chain here. APEX PREDATOR _____

2 The two species benefit from living closely together. SYMBIOSIS _____

3 The insect closely imitates the appearance of a leaf. MIMICRY _____

4 The species faces a real risk of decline. VULNERABLE _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word account of how a keystone or apex species affects its ecosystem, distinguishing observed relationships from broader ecological theory.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

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

2 Connotation

1 apex predator 2 keystone species 3 symbiosis 4 dormant 5 mimicry 6 social hierarchy 7 innate 8 vulnerable species

3 Collocations

1 apex 2 keystone 3 symbiotic 4 dormant 5 mimicry 6 hierarchy 7 innate 8 vulnerable

4 Case notes

1 apex predator 2 keystone species 3 symbiosis 4 mimicry 5 social hierarchy 6 territorial dispute
7 innate 8 vulnerable species 9 dormant 10 dexterity

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Organisms whose removal from an ecosystem triggers effects far exceeding what their numbers alone would suggest.
2 Sea otters, which control sea urchin populations that would otherwise devastate kelp forests.
3 Cascade into dramatic habitat collapse.
4 Protecting a keystone species can preserve an entire ecosystem more efficiently than protecting every species separately.
5 That it requires extensive ecological study.
6 Overlooking equally important but less visible ecological relationships.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 The wolf is the apex predator here. 2 The two species live in symbiosis.
3 The insect uses mimicry. 4 The species is vulnerable.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.