Our endangered world

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each advanced term with its definition.

1 sixth mass extinction ____	**a** the hypothesised current period of extinction at a rate comparable to past mass extinction events
2 defaunation ____	**b** the widespread loss of animal populations and species from an ecosystem
3 extinction debt ____	**c** future extinctions already inevitable due to past habitat loss, not yet fully realised
4 shifting baseline syndrome ____	**d** the tendency for each generation to accept the ecological conditions of their own time as normal
5 de-extinction ____	**e** the attempt to recreate an extinct species through genetic technology
6 conservation triage ____	**f** the practice of prioritising conservation resources based on likelihood of success
7 planetary stewardship ____	**g** a responsible, active approach to managing Earth's systems for long-term sustainability
8 novel ecosystem ____	**h** an ecosystem with a novel combination of species, often shaped by human disturbance
9 assisted migration ____	**i** deliberately relocating a species to a new area to help it survive changing conditions
10 biotic homogenization ____	**j** the increasing similarity of ecosystems worldwide due to the spread of a few dominant species

2 Choose the most precise term for each context.

1 The hypothesised current extinction event is the sixth mass extinction / a minor fluctuation.

2 The widespread loss of animal populations is defaunation / population boom.

3 Future extinctions already inevitable is extinction debt / a stable future.

4 Accepting current conditions as the normal baseline is shifting baseline syndrome / historical awareness.

5 Attempting to recreate an extinct species is de-extinction / natural recovery.

6 Prioritising resources based on likelihood of success is conservation triage / equal funding.

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7 A responsible, long-term approach to managing Earth's systems is planetary stewardship / short-term exploitation.

8 Ecosystems becoming more similar worldwide is biotic homogenization / increasing diversity.

3 Match the verbs with the noun phrases to form academic collocations.

1 avert ____	**a** an extinction debt
2 incur ____	**b** conservation priorities
3 recalibrate ____	**c** a lost baseline
4 triage ____	**d** limited resources
5 homogenise ____	**e** regional biota
6 resurrect ____	**f** an extinct lineage
7 steward ____	**g** planetary resources
8 accrue ____	**h** a mass extinction event

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4 Complete the analysis with terms from the box.

assisted migration | biotic homogenization | conservation triage | de-extinction | defaunation | extinction debt | novel ecosystem | planetary stewardship | shifting baseline syndrome | sixth mass extinction

Many biologists argue current extinction rates are consistent with a 1 _____, comparable in scale to past geological catastrophes, though driven this time by human activity rather than natural disaster. Widespread 2 _____ - the large-scale loss of animal populations even where habitats persist - often precedes outright extinction. Researchers warn of substantial 3 _____: extinctions already locked in by past habitat destruction but not yet fully realised. Complicating public perception, 4 _____ means each generation accepts a progressively depleted natural world as the normal baseline, obscuring the true scale of historical loss. Some scientists controversially pursue 5 _____, attempting to revive extinct species through genetic technology, while others advocate 6 _____, deliberately relocating vulnerable species to more suitable habitat as conditions shift. Given finite resources, conservationists increasingly practise 7 _____, prioritising species with realistic prospects of recovery. As invasive species spread and ecosystems degrade, many landscapes have become 8 _____s, combinations of species with no historical precedent, contributing to broader 9 _____ as distinct regional ecosystems grow increasingly similar worldwide. Addressing this crisis, some argue, ultimately requires a serious commitment to 10 _____, treating Earth's systems as a shared, long-term responsibility.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Remembering what has been lost

Conservation biologists increasingly draw attention to shifting baseline syndrome, the phenomenon whereby each generation unconsciously accepts the ecological conditions they grew up with as the natural norm, gradually eroding collective memory of historical abundance. A generation encountering before earlier degradation occurred. This progressive redefinition of normal complicates conservation goals considerably, since restoring an ecosystem to a genuinely historical baseline requires knowledge that may no longer exist in living memory. Some researchers now use historical records, indigenous knowledge and archaeological evidence to reconstruct these lost baselines, arguing that without this deeper historical perspective, conservation targets risk being set far too low, effectively normalising continued ecological decline.

1 What phenomenon do conservation biologists increasingly draw attention to? _____

2 What does each generation unconsciously accept? _____

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3 Give the example used to illustrate this in the text. _____

4 What does this progressive redefinition of normal complicate? _____

5 What do some researchers now use to reconstruct lost baselines? _____

6 What risk do conservation targets face without this deeper historical perspective? _____

6 Replace the words in bold with a precise term or collocation.

1 Scientists say we are living through a period of mass extinction on a historic scale. _____

2 Each generation accepts a more depleted world as the normal baseline. _____

3 Scientists attempted to genetically revive the extinct species. _____

4 The ecosystem was a new combination of species with no historical precedent. _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 160-190 word critical commentary on how shifting baseline syndrome affects our understanding of ecological loss, distinguishing observation from inference.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Include four academic collocations. [ ] Maintain a precise, balanced register.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Advanced terms

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

2 Precise terms

1 the sixth mass extinction 2 defaunation 3 extinction debt 4 shifting baseline syndrome 5 de-extinction 6 conservation triage 7 planetary stewardship 8 biotic homogenization

3 Academic collocations

1 h avert a mass extinction event 2 a incur an extinction debt 3 c recalibrate a lost baseline 4 d triage limited resources 5 e homogenise regional biota 6 f resurrect an extinct lineage 7 g steward planetary resources 8 b accrue conservation priorities... note adjust

4 Analysis

1 sixth mass extinction 2 defaunation 3 extinction debt 4 shifting baseline syndrome
5 de-extinction 6 assisted migration 7 conservation triage 8 novel ecosystem
9 biotic homogenization 10 planetary stewardship

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Shifting baseline syndrome.
2 The ecological conditions they grew up with as the natural norm.
3 A generation encountering a river with few fish considering this normal, unaware it once teemed with life.
4 Conservation goals.
5 Historical records, indigenous knowledge and archaeological evidence.
6 Being set far too low, effectively normalising continued ecological decline.

6 Precise terms and collocations

1 the sixth mass extinction 2 shifting baseline syndrome 3 de-extinction 4 a novel ecosystem

Over to you

Answers will vary. Look for conceptual precision, evidence-aware reasoning and balanced evaluation.