

Bandicoot Reading Comprehension

Name _____

The eastern barred bandicoot is a small, rabbit-sized marsupial native to southeastern Australia and the island of Tasmania. The eastern barred bandicoot is largely light brown with long ears and a long snout. It uses its strong claws and snout to dig small holes in the ground to get at insects and invertebrates. It has distinctive bars or stripes on its hindquarters. It is strictly nocturnal and rests in beds of grass during the day. One interesting fact about bandicoots is that their 12-day gestation period is among the shortest of any mammal. Gestation refers to the time period in which a female is pregnant. Males and females can breed at four months of age and a female may have three or four litters per year. Young bandicoots stay in their mother's pouches for about two months. While females can birth as many as 16 young in a single year, mortality rates of young bandicoots are extremely high. Furthermore, the average lifespan of a bandicoot is less than three years. There are other, more common species of bandicoots that live in parts of Australia including the golden, northern brown, and southern brown bandicoots. All have suffered severe population declines. There are two sub-species of eastern barred bandicoots.

Victorian sub-species

The Victorian sub-species of the eastern barred bandicoot was native to southwest Victoria. It was once common throughout the region's grasslands and Basalt Plains. Habitat loss and the introduction of invasive predators such as foxes and cats caused a total collapse of the population resulting in its extinction in the wild. The current population is captive. Plans for reintroduction are dependent on finding predator-free habitats, community education, and intensive research. There are thought to be about 150 Victorian eastern barred bandicoots left.

Tasmanian sub-species

The larger Tasmanian sub-species is listed as a vulnerable species according to the IUCN Red List. Populations of wild Tasmanian bandicoots still exist because the island of Tasmania still has suitable habitat and lacks foxes. Eastern barred bandicoots, however, still suffer predation for feral acts and dogs and also succumb to a disease called Toxoplasmosis - which is often fatal to bandicoots.

- 1. Which of the following is not a characteristic of a bandicoot?**
 - A. Strong claws
 - B. Long snout
 - C. Long lifespan
 - D. Long ears

- 2. Compared to other species of bandicoot, the eastern barred bandicoot is...**
 - A. less common.
 - B. equally as numerous.
 - C. more common.
 - D. Endangered.

- 3. Both the Victorian and Tasmanian sub-species of the eastern barred bandicoot...**
 - A. are often killed by foxes.
 - B. are endangered species.
 - C. are extinct in the wild.
 - D. are preyed upon by feral cats.

- 4. Which of the following is NOT true?**
 - A. Bandicoots have one of the longest gestation periods of any mammal
 - B. Bandicoots have short lifespans
 - C. Bandicoots populations throughout Australia are declining
 - D. There are no wild Victorian eastern barred bandicoots left in the wild.

- 5. Which of the following is least likely?**
 - A. Seeing a Tasmanian eastern barred bandicoot in a grassland in Tasmania
 - B. Seeing a Tasmanian eastern barred bandicoot that is has lived for two years
 - C. Seeing a Tasmanian eastern barred bandicoot hunting during the heat of the day.
 - D. Seeing a nine-month old Tasmanian eastern barred bandicoot with a litter of young

6. What is an invasive predator as used in the following sentence?

Habitat loss and the introduction of invasive predators such as foxes and cats caused a total collapse of the population resulting in its extinction in the wild.

- A. Small to medium-sized cats
- B. Deadly predators
- C. Predators that do not naturally occur in a habitat
- D. Predators that are more common than their prey

7. Complete the analogy.

bandicoot : marsupial :: (bandicoot is to marsupial as..)

- A. reptile : snake
- B. tiger : cub
- C. hamster : mammal
- D. robin : egg