

COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

READING

I. You are going to read an extract from a magazine article. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A – G the one which fits each gap (1–6). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

Scottish Wildcat

On my living-room wall I have a painting of a wildcat by John Holmes of which I am extremely fond. It depicts a snarling, spitting animal, teeth bared and back arched: a taut coiled spring ready to unleash some unknown fury.

1

However, the physical differences are tangible. The wildcat is a much larger animal, weighing in some cases up to seven kilos, the same as a typical male fox. The coat pattern is superficially similar to a domestic tabby cat but it is all stripes and no spots. The tail is thicker and blunter, with three to five black rings. The animal has an altogether heavier look.

The Scottish wildcat was originally distinguished as a separate subspecies in 1912, but it is now generally recognised that there is little difference between the Scottish and other European populations. According to an excellent report on the wildcat printed in 1991, the animals originally occurred in a variety of habitats throughout Europe.

2

It was during the nineteenth century, with the establishment of many estates used by landowners for hunting, that the wildcat became a nuisance and its rapid decline really began; 198 wildcats were killed in three years in the area of Glengarry, for example. However, things were later to improve for the species.

3

The future is by no means secure, though, and recent evidence suggests that the wildcat is particularly vulnerable to local eradication, especially in the remoter parts of northern and western Scotland. This is a cause for real concern, given that the animals in

these areas have less contact with domestic cats and are therefore purer.

4

Part of the problem stems from the fact that the accepted physical description of the species originates from the selective nature of the examination process by the British Natural History Museum at the start of the century, and this has been used as the type-definition for the animal ever since. Animals that did not conform to that large blunt-tailed ‘tabby’ description were discarded as not being wildcats. In other words, an artificial collection of specimens was built up, exhibiting the features considered typical of the wildcat.

The current research aims to resolve this potential problem. It is attempting to find out whether there are any physical features which characterise the so-called wild-living cats.

5

But what of his lifestyle? Wildcat kittens are usually born in May/June in a secluded den, secreted in a gap amongst boulders. Another favourite location is in the roots of a tree.

6

Rabbits are a favourite prey, and some of the best areas to see wildcats are at rabbit warrens close to the forest and moorland edge. Mice, small birds and even insects also form a large part of the diet, and the animal may occasionally take young deer.

The wildcat is one of the Scottish Highlands’ most exciting animals. Catch a glimpse of one and the memory will linger forever.

- A** The recruitment of men to the armed forces during the conflict in Europe from 1914 to 1918 meant there was very little persecution, since gamekeepers went off to fight. As the number of gamekeepers decreased, the wildcat began to increase its range, recolonising many of its former haunts. Extinction was narrowly averted.
- B** The wildcat waits for a while in rapt concentration, ears twitching and eyes watching, seeing everything and hearing everything, trying to detect the tell-tale movement of a vole or a mouse. But there is nothing, and in another leap he disappears into the gloom.
- C** The results, which are expected shortly, will be fascinating. But anyone who has seen a wildcat will be in little doubt that there is indeed a unique and distinctive animal living in the Scottish Highlands, whatever his background.
- D** They probably used deciduous and coniferous woodland for shelter, particularly in winter, and hunted over more open areas such as forest edge, open woodland, thickets and scrub, grassy areas and marsh. The wildcat was probably driven into more mountainous areas by a combination of deforestation and persecution.
- E** As the animals emerge, their curiosity is aroused by every movement and rustle in the vegetation. Later they will accompany their mother on hunting trips, learning quickly, and soon become adept hunters themselves.
- F** This is what makes many people think that the wildcat is a species in its own right. Research currently being undertaken by Scottish Natural Heritage is investigating whether the wildcat really is distinct from its homeliving cousin, or whether it is nothing more than a wild-living form of the domestic cat.
- G** It is a typical image most folk have of the beast, but it is very much a false one, for the wildcat is little more than a bigger version of the domestic cat, and probably shows his anger as often.

WORD FORMATION

B.J. Thomas, *Intermediate Vocabulary*, pp. 60-81

Use each of the word given in *CAPITALS* to form a word that fits in the space with the same number. All words given *MUST* be altered.

1. You will find two with this letter – a check and a photograph.

ENCLOSE

2. Continued from the plant means that the river remains polluted.

LEAK

3. The school has a strong culture of of students with special needs.

INCLUDE

4. You can accuse me of, but I still wouldn't fight in a war.

COWARDLY

5. He didn't even have the to call and say he couldn't come.

COURTEOUS

6. Most of the students I knew at university were serious and

INDUSTRY

7. She kept up the that her husband had died in order to claim the insurance money.

PRETEND

8. The main objective is to find a solution that is to the company in terms of cost.

AGREE

9. It rained the first day but the of the trip was fine.

REMAIN

10. She was of Greg's concern for her health.

APPRECIATE

11. What is the date of your credit card?

EXPIRE

12. He's as as an eel - you can never get a straight answer out of him.

SLIP

13. Strawberries do not after picking.

RIPE

14. Lars enjoyed the warmth and of these occasions.

GAY

15. Farming used to dominate the community and much of the area was and remains

FOREST

16. The table was covered with chocolate desserts of all descriptions.

RESIST

17. Synthetic fabrics are less susceptible to than natural ones.

SHRINK

18. He found that the students were bored and often

RESPECT

19. A robot dressed in a habit burst into the room.

MONK

20. He was convicted of obtaining money by

DECEIVE