

# Top threats to our animal planet

Have you ever wondered why so many animals all over the world are at risk of becoming extinct?

Scientists use a special word to remember all of the different things that put animals at risk. Each letter stands for a different threat to animals.

That's a great way to remember something! But what's the word?

The word is HIPPO - and we don't mean the animal!

**HIPPO**  
stands for:

- H - Habitat loss
- I - Invasive species
- P - Pollution
- P - Population growth
- O - Overharvesting



## HABITAT LOSS

Animals all over the world are having their habitats (homes) destroyed. This often happens because humans will use the land for something different, for example, to build homes on, or to build roads, or for farming. Forests are being cut down. Each year, 1% of the world's tropical forest is destroyed. This doesn't seem like much, but these forests are homes to lots of different species of animal.

When we destroy so many habitats for our own purpose, the animals who called those habitats their home have nowhere to live.

## INVASIVE SPECIES

This sounds quite complicated, but it's really very simple!

An invasive species - or introduced species - simply means that an animal moves to an area that isn't its natural home, sometimes by accident, or sometimes deliberately by humans. When they arrive, they put the species that belongs there (called the native species) at risk - either because they compete for food, or maybe because they hunt the native species. For example, cats and foxes have been introduced to different habitats all over the world - and they hunt many species of birds and small mammals.

## POLLUTION

Pollution contaminates the natural environment, putting many different species at risk. For example, imagine an oil spill out at sea. We've all heard of this happening, and the spill forms a thin layer of oil which poisons sea life and damages the fur and feathers of sea birds and mammals.

## POPULATION GROWTH

Did you know there are over 7 billion people in the world? If you're wondering why all these people cause a problem for animals, it's simply that there isn't the room on Earth for all these people and the homes we need to live in, to live alongside the natural environments animals need to call home.

## OVERHARVESTING

Some of the world's biggest animals were hunted a lot in the past - such as whales, elephants and rhinos. Many species are 'overharvested', which means they're taken from their natural environment faster than they can be replaced.

Each month, we'll tell you more about animals at risk, and what we can do to help. Keep reading and learning, wildlife warriors, and we can make a difference!