Endangered Species

Background

The Canadian Nature Federation has identified 380 endangered species in Canada. Of these, 115 are near extinction. Worldwide, there are over 9485 endangered species. Some species, such as whooping cranes or giant pandas, have populations of only a few hundred.

There is often debate about the state of a particular species. In 2000, the Red List compiled by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) listed 81 species of whale that are classified as extinct, endangered, or vulnerable. Most nations have stopped all commercial whale hunting. However, Japan and Norway continue whaling, and Japan even increased the number of whale species that it hunts.

In southern Africa, elephant herds are often reduced by killing whole families of elephants. The governments involved claim that such culling keeps the herds within the limits of the available food supply and prevents the elephants from encroaching on farmers' fields. However, critics claim that the culling is done primarily for the profit derived from selling the elephants' ivory tusks and reduces the number of elephants dangerously. Thirty years ago, there were three million elephants in Africa. Estimates today place the number at less than 250 000.

In 2001, the government of British Columbia reintroduced hunting of grizzly bears, claiming that their numbers have rebounded enough that hunting will not endanger the species. The government places the number of adult grizzlies at over 13 000. The Canadian Nature Federation claims the number of grizzlies is at most 6000, and could be as low as 4000.

As you can see from these examples, obtaining accurate statistics is vital to the management of endangered species.

Your Task

Collect and analyse data about a species of your choice to determine whether it is endangered.

Developing an Action Plan

You will need to select a species that you believe may be endangered, find reliable sources of data about this species, and outline a method for analysing the data and drawing conclusions from them.