Cambridge Assessment International Education

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US) **0524/13**

Paper 1 Reading **May/June 2022**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–1(e)** on the question paper.

Text A: About snakes

There are more than 3000 species of snakes on the planet. They're found everywhere except in Antarctica, Iceland, Ireland, Greenland, and New Zealand. About 600 species are venomous, and only about seven percent are able to kill or significantly wound a human.

Most snakes live on land, but there are about 70 species that live in oceans. Sea snakes and their cousins, kraits, are some of the most venomous snakes that exist, but they pose little threat to humans because they're shy and their fangs are too short to do much damage.

Almost all snakes are covered in protective scales. They're reptiles, so are cold-blooded and must regulate their body temperature externally. Scales serve several purposes: in arid climates they trap moisture and reduce friction as the snake moves.

Snakes also have forked tongues, which they flick in different directions to smell their surroundings. That lets them know when danger—or food—is nearby.

Snakes have several other ways to detect a snack. Openings called pit holes in front of their eyes sense the heat given off by warm-blooded prey. Bones in their lower jaws pick up vibrations from rodents and other scurrying animals. When they do capture prey, snakes can eat animals up to three times bigger than their head is wide because their lower jaws unhinge from their upper jaws. Once in a snake's mouth, the prey is held in place by teeth that face inward, trapping it there.

Not quite as photogenic as pandas or polar bears, we hear much less about endangered snakes than we do some other animals. But despite their remarkable evolutionary adaptability, some snakes suffer the same fate as the more well-publicized species that are considered endangered. Snakes aren't hunted in great numbers and many live without fear of predation, which generally leads conservationists to blame their decline on environmental factors, mainly habitat destruction and climate change. Some snakes are already extinct, more are critically endangered, including a number of sea snakes. One theory claims changes in sea water temperatures may be a factor, but more investigation is required.

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Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Text B: Teaching people to hate snakes is a disaster for ecology

Did you know it's World Snake Day on 16th July? We invite you to slither on down to join the party, meet our snake experts and enjoy lots of fun snake-themed activities.

Humans often fear what they don't understand. To most, snakes are a mystery. Snakes rely on their ability to avoid detection, so we rarely see them. This leads to a void of direct knowledge that's filled by myth and media – portraying snakes as cold-blooded killers and focussing on how dangerous some can be. Our aim is to tip the scales (excuse the pun), educate and encourage guests to confront their fears.

During the event, there'll be Zoo Chats – guests can get up close to, even touch, several snake species. At 10:30 am, guests can watch the zoo's largest snake resident – a reticulated python – being weighed and measured. At midday, guests can venture over to The Swamp to see and learn about recently hatched Grey-banded Kingsnake and Jamaican Boa babies.

Though threatened by many of the same issues affecting other wildlife, including habitat loss, climate change and disease, negative attitudes impeding efforts to address other threats may be the biggest barrier to snake conservation.

In the United States, for example, public outcry based on fear and misinformation recently halted a scientifically sound conservation plan for timber rattlesnakes. Another project at the same location that involved releasing eagles was embraced by the community. Rattlesnakes are no less important than eagles. In fact, they may help reduce the incidence of Lyme disease, which affects thousands of people each year, by reducing the number of rodents that harbour this disease. But emotions override facts, it seems, where snakes are concerned.

Snakes play an integral role in maintaining balance in the ecosystem – in most ecosystems on earth, snakes can be both predator and prey. When a large prey-population attracts and sustains a large snake population, those snakes become prey for birds, mammals, and even other snakes! As predators, snakes keep prey-populations in balance. Snakes provide an easy, environmentally friendly, free and natural pest-control service.

But snakes are worth saving not because of what they can do for us, but because of who they are. Snakes share many behaviours with us, behaviours we value. They have friends. They take care of their kids and even their friends' kids too.

Want to help us change how people view and treat snakes? Visit the World Snake Day website.

Read **Text C**, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** and **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text C: Rainforest tales

The writer of this online article is reviewing his guided visit around the Kalinga Center for Rainforest Ecology (KCRE). Located near Agumbe, the five-acre site is nestled in the heart of the rainforest, in the Western Ghats mountain range.

The weather had been pleasant when we'd started off, but Agumbe, true to reputation, welcomed us with a sudden downpour from nowhere. Visibility was low.

Though the camp site is equipped with solar power, we'd been told to carry fully charged batteries for our cameras and flashlights. Telephone and internet connectivity is intermittent. The closest hospital and pharmacy are 24km away. Huffing and puffing with our bags and gear, we scrambled gratefully down the three flights of rocky steps added recently to cater for less-experienced trekkers. At the bottom, we were greeted by a snoozing Common Vine Snake, so inconspicuous that it took me quite some time of bobbing my head to spot it. I still cherish that precise moment when I saw my first snake in the wild, perfectly poised on its luxurious bed of green. I knew I would never behold snakes the same way again.

After a sumptuous breakfast from our local host-family, we were keen and ready for our first official rainforest walk. In the dining hall (also used for discussions and briefings) our local guide handed me ugly brown socks that would be my saviors (though not a 100 percent guarantee) from the leeches, reminding everyone this was not a tourist resort. We needed to take care of our own belongings and ensure we kept electronic equipment dry.

Three hours later, returning from the trek, I felt bubbles of amazement and wonder rising. I'd seen gliding lizards fly effortlessly between trees, intricate dragonflies of infinite varieties and delicately etched, golden frogs. The overcast sky, saturated to the brim, had poured down heavily, drenching the forest, its native creatures, and the handful of humans who happened to be there. Thereafter began the frenzy of activities and sounds that engulfs the woods after a good rain – rhythmic sounds, musical, coordinated and orchestrated, and pleasantly deafening.

Ah! My brimming heart and soothed soul enjoyed restful sleep in the tent that first night. Bonfires and loud music are prohibited to avoid any disturbance to animals and hygienic common bathrooms (with hot-water facilities) were appreciated. Everyone was expected to wash their own plates and glasses after every meal. We were encouraged to separate organic waste into the respective waste bins before retiring each night. All inorganic waste went back with you.

Next morning revealed a forest blooming with fungi – a fairy-tale landscape of frilled coral cups, delicate saucers, and robust yellow umbrellas. And if that brightly colored confectionery wasn't enough, a magnificent azure-colored sphere, hard as shell, caught our eye. No amount of speculation could have made me imagine that the little blue ball was a millipede! We observed at a respectful distance, reminded that handling, agitating, or disturbing any wildlife is not permitted and will warrant strict action. Collection of any kind of flora or fauna is forbidden.

With no rains, the forest lay quieter that night, though croaking bush-frogs put their vocal sacs to good use for our entertainment and a meter-long green Pit Viper hung from a branch, as if casually posing for our photographs. My first ever "wildlife

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photography'' attempt was fun. And I could start off with a Viper! I remembered advice to exercise caution, control, and care during observation and photography in the forest to avoid stressing species or exposing them to danger.

The last walk on the final day through the rainforest, through leech territory, through the sights and smells of moist earth and greens evoked an undefinable love in me. I'd experienced the wonders of a rainforest, in a spell-binding weekend that drew to a close with inspiring presentations about the place, its conservationist founder and his tremendous work studying and saving magnificent King Cobras.

Ignorance had metamorphosed into sheer passion for creatures I'd been prejudiced about. Curious to learn more about the life of such serpents and eager to accompany experts on live snake-rescue calls, I've already signed up for the next workshop.

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