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Vocabulary: biology 词汇: 生物

Is it possible to be too clever? Could it be that a big brain is actually a dangerous **asset**?

Whilst the **brainy** human species **goes from strength to strength**, a study suggests that having an abundance of **grey matter** directly increases the risk of extinction in our mammal cousins.



Biologist Manuela Gonzalez-Suarez, from the University of Reading, says that big brains come with a clear **downside**.

"The cost is too high," she told BBC Future. They require a lot of energy to grow and maintain. Large-brained animals also have longer **gestational periods**, meaning they produce fewer **offspring**. And their **young** need greater parental attention until they become independent.

These **traits** mean "populations cannot grow fast, or quickly compensate for additional **mortality**," she says.

In short, big brains are an investment not all animals can afford. And this **precarious** situation is made worse by the fact that many large mammals are themselves the target of **poaching** or live in threatened **habitats**.

Some animals have long since decided that brains weren't necessary. BBC Future suggests that sponges **evolved** to lose their brains over time, as they offered no tangible benefits.

But what about humans? We are the most intelligent **species** on Earth. We have **tamed** the natural environment, developed incredible technologies, and settled across almost every corner of the planet. But all this may be **exacerbating** the problem for other species.

Gonzalez-Suarez says: "It is our collective responsibility as scientists who study **megafauna** to act to prevent their decline." Time to put our big brains to good use.

词汇表

asset	长处，优点
brainy	有头脑的，聪明的
go from strength to strength	不断壮大，从强大变得更强
grey matter	(口语) 大脑，智力
downside	不利之处
gestational period	妊娠期
offspring	后代，子孙
young	动物的幼小后代
trait	特质，特征
mortality	死亡率
precarious	危险的，不确定的
to poach	偷猎
habitat	动物的栖息地，生存环境
to evolve	进化
species	物种
to tame	控制，驾驭
to exacerbate	使恶化，使加剧
megafauna	巨型动物群

测验与练习

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. Why are big brains 'expensive'?
2. Which phrase means 'shared duty'?
3. What does Gonzales-Suarez believe the scientific community should do about large animals?
4. Why did sponges lose their brains?
5. True or false? *Mammals with big brains increase the risk of extinction for humans.*

2. 请你在不参考课文的情况下完成下列练习。选择一个意思合适的单词填入句子的空格处。

1. Being a famous, sexy, wealthy, popular celebrity does come with one big _____: you have no privacy.

downside	asset	habitat	trait
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2. A mother tiger protecting her _____ will viciously attack potential threats.

megafauna	habitat	young	species
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3. Sponges _____ strength to strength since losing their brains.

gone from	go from	have gone from	are going to
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4. If you tell him directly it will only _____ the problem. Find another way to let him know.

prevent	excruciate	evolve	exacerbate
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5. She's the _____ person I know! Straight A-grades again last year.

biggest brained	brainiest	most brainy	brainest
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答案

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. Why are big brains 'expensive'?

Big brains cost both energy and time. They require energy to grow and maintain. Animals with big brains also require a longer time in the womb and being cared for by their parents.

2. Which phrase means 'shared duty'?

Collective responsibility.

3. What does Gonzales-Suarez believe the scientific community should do about large animals?

She believes scientists should work together to prevent the decline of megafauna.

4. Why did sponges lose their brains?

According to the article, having a brain offered insufficient benefits for sponges.

5. True or false? *Mammals with big brains increase the risk of extinction for humans.*

False: Humans increase the risk of extinction for large mammals.

2. 请你在不参考课文的情况下完成下列练习。选择一个意思合适的单词填入句子的空格处。

1. Being a famous, sexy, wealthy, popular celebrity does come with one big **downside**: you have no privacy.

2. A mother tiger protecting her **young** will viciously attack potential threats.

3. Sponges **have gone from** strength to strength since losing their brains.

4. If you tell him directly it will only **exacerbate** the problem. Find another way to let him know.

5. She's the **brainiest** person I know! Straight A-grades again last year.