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Sample Reading Questions Reading (1) The northern spotted owl is the only species whose survival has been definitively proven to depend on old growth. For at least a dozen other species, ranging from the marten to the pileated woodpecker, a reservoir of old growth habitat may also be essential. But using radio collars, researcher Eric Forsman followed foraging flights from owl nests in the broken tops of ancient Douglas fir and fed the data into a computer. The computer-generated maps revealed an overwhelming preference for hunting in forests over two hundred years old, even if to do so the owls have to travel to the limits of their ranges, bypassing plenty of slightly younger forest en route to a kill. The owl needs old growth, and lots of it. But he probably won't get it. (2) Early in the 1980s government biologists decided that of the 1,000 or so nesting pairs of northern spotted owls in Oregon, 400 were needed to guarantee survival of the species. They initially proposed setting aside 1,000 acres for each nesting pair. Later studies showed an average pair needed 2,200 acres and in some conditions of terrain, well over 3,000. But Bureau of Land Management timber managers agreed to a mere 300 acres of per pair when, as part of an interagency agreement, it took responsibility for 90 owls. Later the agency's director indicated that the Bureau had no legal obligation to honor the agreement if it interfered with timber sales. Some years after Forsman

reported his original findings, population geneticist Russell Lande completed another analysis of the owl and its habitat, concluding that the owl was headed for certain extinction. Nevertheless, in 1987 officials at the US Forestry Service and at US Fish and Wildlife decided not to list the owl as threatened or endangered. (3)

Inconveniently for the logging industry, the little owl has turned out to be anything but insignificant. As early as 1968, a small group of researchers were applying modeling techniques to forest ecosystems. Ecosystems research is politically awkward. It considers nothing by itself. In the Douglas fir forests of the Cascades and the Coast Ranges the owl's ecological role is to cull and keep healthy the population of small mammals that are its favorite foods, among them the fungus-eating California red-backed vole and the northern flying squirrel. (4) A flying squirrel would not launch himself into space from the safety of an old-growth fir's wrinkled bark, nor a vole emerge from his burrows under an old-growth down log, were they not also gourmets. They are after truffles, the extremely edible fungus that is found near the roots of trees and plants. (5) It has been known for a century that woody plants, and especially conifers, develop symbiotic relationships between the tips of their roots and certain fungi. These fungus-root combinations are called mycorrhizae. But their full interconnectedness with the forest ecosystem was not widely understood, even among botanists, until 1977, when a zoologist and mushroom expert began working as a team. Their research explained that when the fungi such as mushrooms and truffles wrap themselves tightly about root tips, they perform the

spongelike services that fungi do best: absorbing minerals, nitrogen and water from the soil and feeding them to the tree. nThey also produce growth-regulating chemicals that induce the tree to produce new root tips and strengthen the tree ' s immune system, giving it a longer life span. n (6) Squirrels, mice and voles, along with certain insects, eat the fruiting bodies of the fungitrufflesand carry the spores to new sites in their intestines. Though some mycorrhizal fungi fruit above ground as mushrooms and scatter their spores on the wind, truffles are entirely earthbound. Unless animals eat them, they don ' t reproduce. And it is these fungi that are adeptly conserving moisture on the steep slopes where ground water runs off rapidly and where foresters have a hard time growing new trees. As their spores ripen, the truffles begin to emit strong and distinctive odorsfruity, fishy, cheesy, garlickyso that the rodents can home in on them with a minimum of digging. Squirrels that, for whatever reason, can ' t do this efficiently enough, of course, get eaten by owls. Reading Questions 1. According to paragraph 1, what is true about northern spotted owls?A. They fly relatively long distances to get preferred foods.B. They have moved their nests to trees in relatively young forests.C. Their flights sometimes surpass the limits of the radio collar.D. There are fewer northern spotted owls than there are martens and pileated woodpeckers. 2. According to paragraph 2, what action did the Bureau of Land management take?A. It announced the owl was in danger of extinction.B. It set aside 1000 acres of land for nesting.C. It went to court against the timber managers.D. It decided to ignore a previous interagency agreement.

3. In paragraph 3, which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in the passage? Incorrect choices change the meaning in major ways or leave out important information. Inconveniently for the logging industry, the little owl has turned out to be anything but insignificant. A. In spite of the nuisance of caring for it, the wood companies have seen the importance of the small owl. B. Because the owl is small, the lumber industry has said that it will not be convenient to turn forests into state parks. C. The owl has ultimately become extremely important, to the displeasure of the logging industry. D. Fearing that it was too much trouble, the timber company decided to turn over the significant job of caring for the owl.

4. The word awkward in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to A. liberal B. motivated C. delicate D. aggressive

5. The word cull in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to A. thin B. nurture C. track D. attract

6. In paragraph 3, what does the author say is challenging about ecosystem research? A. It has to look at how all the parts are related to one another. B. It requires costly computer systems for modeling. C. It relies on political funding to support its programs. D. It is so new that an accepted methodology is still being worked out.

7. According to paragraph 4, why does the author say the flying squirrel and the vole are gourmets? A. To show how unnecessary their killings are B. To emphasize their discriminating eating habits C. To contrast the behaviors of flying squirrels and voles D. To demonstrate the decayed state of old growth habitats

8. In paragraph 5, all of the following statements about mycorrhizae are true EXCEPT A. They

are symbiotic life forms. B. They allow fungus to give the tree minerals. C. They play a critical role in forests. D. They infuse chlorophyll into the roots.

9. Look at the four squares [n] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage. In trade for all this, the tree supplies sugars that the chlorophyll-lacking fungi cannot manufacture for themselves. Where would the sentence best fit?

10. The word they in paragraph 6 refers to A. bodies B. mushrooms C. truffles D. animals

11. The phrase adeptly in paragraph 6 is closest in meaning to A. precariously B. competently C. inconspicuously D. generously

12. According to the information in paragraph 6, which of the following can be inferred about steep hills which are not covered by mycorrhizal fungi?

A. The squirrels would come to dig there for other foods. B. There would be insufficient moisture for new tree growth. C. The soil would have an unpleasant odor. D. The fungus spores would fly over them to more distant terrain.

13. Directions: An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some answer choices do not belong because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas. This question is worth 2 points. This ecology of old growth habitats has been found to be complex and highly interconnected. #65533.

#65533.

Ecosystems research was carried out in Douglas fir forests near the Cascades. #65533. Government officials have provided backing for

the old growth habitats by protecting rare species. Typical of the old growth symbiotic relationships were the small animals which came to eat the truffles growing near old growth, but which in turn went on to spread the truffle spores. In contrast to many old growth species, the northern spotted owl is likely destined to become extinct.

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