



# SeaWorld/Busch Gardens Raptors

## 9-12 Classroom Activities

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# Raptor Population Ecology

### OBJECTIVE

The student will calculate population size, carrying capacity, annual change in population size, and maximum rate of population increase.

### ACTION

1. Divide the class into groups of three or four.
2. Explain that each group is going to analyze the results from a ten-year raptor study. Each group will be assigned a different study to analyze involving different raptor species. Students will write a brief synopsis about their assigned raptor species including the following information: range, habitat, diet, incubation, description, and status. Students should locate a photograph of the raptor to include in their research.
3. Review the definitions listed in the background and the procedure for calculating population size, carrying capacity, annual change in population size, and maximum rate of population increase.
4. Instruct students to read all the background information on the study provided them, calculate the population size, carrying capacity, maximum rate of population increase, and the annual change in population size for each year of the study. All calculated totals should be rounded to the nearest 100th and documented on the raptor chart provided. Note: For convenience, information given in the background is already listed on the chart.
5. Instruct students to answer the questions on their funsheets regarding their study analysis.
6. Create a mock raptor convention for students to display the results of their study. Each student group will act as representatives from their particular study and present their research. The teacher will check the calculations for accuracy using the teacher's guide.

## MATERIALS

### For each student group:

- copy of a Raptor Population Ecology funsheet (studies 1 to 8)
- copy of Background Information on Formulas study guide
- calculator
- library or internet access

### for class:

- Raptor Population Ecology Answer Sheet

## PREPARATION

Photocopy the raptor population ecology funsheets. Make sure there are enough sheets for each student group (groups of three or four) to have one. Fold sheets in half and have a representative from each student group choose one.



Screech owls, like Emma above, are the smallest North American owls with "ear tufts." Emma was rescued after being hit by a car and losing a wing. Today she helps the Busch Gardens Tampa Bay Education Department staff teach about raptor conservation.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON FORMULAS

**Population (N):** A group of individuals of one species that live in a particular geographic area.

**Carrying Capacity (K):** The maximum population size that can be supported by the available resources.

**Biotic Potential ( $r_{\max}$ ):** The maximum rate of natural increase that can possibly occur under ideal circumstances (unlimited resources, space, no predators, no parasites, etc.). It is very difficult to calculate the biotic potential for a species since these optimal circumstances rarely occur.

$\Delta N$ : The number of organisms added to a population within a unit of time.

## CALCULATIONS FOR ACTIVITY

Population Calculations:

- The initial population for the first year of each study is stated and listed on the raptor chart. During the course of this activity other designated populations will appear on the raptor chart. The reasoning for these new population totals are listed in the background section of each study.
- $\Delta N$  represents the number of new organisms coming into a population. The  $\Delta N$  totals calculated at the end of each year and must be added to the population. (See  $\Delta N$  calculation section below). The calculated sum represents the new population total for the subsequent year. For example: If the population for the first year of the study is 20 individuals and the  $\Delta N$  was calculated to be 2. Then the population for the second year of the study will be 22 individuals.

Carrying Capacity Percentage Calculations :

- The carrying capacity is stated with each study.
- The following equation will be used to determine what percentage of the carrying capacity (K) is still available for population growth:  $(K-N)/K$ . For example: If the population (N) is 20 individuals and the carrying capacity (K) is 50 individuals, then 60% of the carrying capacity is left.  $50-20/50 = 0.6$        $0.6 \times 100 = 60\%$ .

Biotic Potential Calculations ( $r_{\max}$ )

- The initial biotic potential is stated with each study. However, this is the maximum rate of increase a species can gain. Each study included in the activity begins with a certain population. That population reduces the biotic potential ( $r_{\max}$ ) because they are taking up space and resources. Therefore the  $r_{\max}$  value must be calculated for each year because the population fluctuates.
- The biotic potential value is calculated by multiplying the initial  $r_{\max}$  stated with each study (this is the optimal rate that the species could grow at) by the carrying capacity percentage. The  $r_{\max}$  value is multiplied by the carrying capacity percentage because there is already an initial population taking up resources and space. Therefore a new  $r_{\max}$  value must be found to accommodate the existing population. For example, if it was stated that  $r_{\max}$  was 0.05 or 5% (this is the optimal rate of increase) and the carrying capacity percentage was calculated to be 0.4 (40% of the carrying capacity left in the environment), then the new  $r_{\max}$  value is 0.02 or 2%.  $(0.4)(0.05) = 0.02$  or 2% Interpretation of Results: The initial population could increase every year by 5%, but since there is already a population in the environment, the rate of increase has been reduced to 2%. This new  $r_{\max}$  value takes into account the existing population.

$\Delta N$  Calculations:

- This is the number by which the population will increase by at the end of each year. It is calculated by multiplying the  $r_{\max}$  value (this is the  $r_{\max}$  value that takes into account the existing population, NOT the optimal  $r_{\max}$  value stated initially) by the population. For example: If (N) is 20 individuals and the  $r_{\max}$  value was calculated to be 0.05 or 5%, then the number of individuals to be added to the population is 1.  $(0.05)(20) = 1.0$  Then one individual must be added to next year's population.

# Raptor Population Ecology Funsheet

## Study 1: bald eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Carrying capacity (K): 5,000

Maximum rate of increase ( $r_{\max}$ ): 0.05

Population (N): 1,000

### Background:

During the third year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 3,200.

During the fifth year of the study there was emigration. The population decreased to 2,000.

During the seventh year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 4,000.

Note: Answers need to be rounded to the nearest 100th.

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	1,000			
2				
3	3,200			
4				
5	2,000			
6				
7	4,000			
8				
9				
10				

- Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity?
- Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%?
- Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached?
- Graph the results of the study.



\*Note: All values for population, carrying capacity, and biotic potential are fictional. They do not represent actual values.

# Raptor Population Ecology Funsheet

## Study 2: great horned owl *Bubo virginianus*

Carrying capacity (K): 3,500

Maximum rate of increase ( $r_{\max}$ ): 0.05

Population (N): 750

### Background:

During the fourth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 2,250.

During the sixth year of the study there was emigration. The population decreased to 1,700.

During the eighth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 3,200.

Note: Answers need to be rounded to the nearest 100th.

Year	N	$(K-N)/K$	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	750			
2				
3				
4	2,250			
5				
6	1,700			
7				
8	3,200			
9				
10				

- Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity?
- Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%?
- Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached?
- Graph the results of the study.



\*Note: All values for population, carrying capacity, and biotic potential are fictional. They do not represent actual values.

# Raptor Population Ecology Funsheet

## Study 3: red-tailed hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Carrying capacity (K): 10,000

Maximum rate of increase ( $r_{\max}$ ): 0.04

Population (N): 6,000

### Background:

During the third year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 8,400.

During the fifth year of the study there was emigration. The population decreased to 5,500.

During the eighth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 7,000.

Note: Answers need to be rounded to the nearest 100th.

Year	N	$(K-N)/K$	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	6,000			
2				
3	8,400			
4				
5	5,500			
6				
7				
8				
9	7,000			
10				

- Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity?
- Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%?
- Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached?
- Graph the results of the study.



\*Note: All values for population, carrying capacity, and biotic potential are fictional. They do not represent actual values.

# Raptor Population Ecology Funsheet

## Study 4: screech owl *Otus asio*

Carrying capacity (K): 1,000

Maximum rate of increase ( $r_{\max}$ ): 0.03

Population (N): 575

### Background:

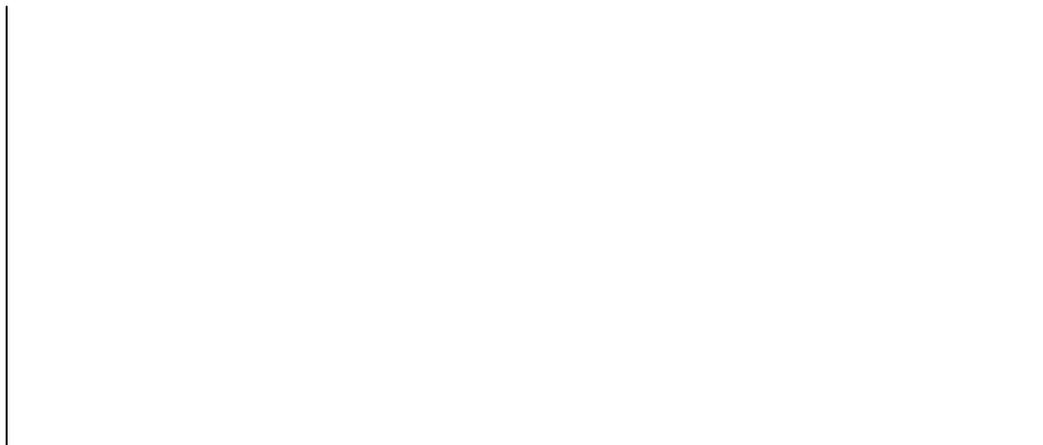
During the fourth year of the study there was emigration. The population decreased to 300.

During the sixth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 575.

Note: Answers need to be rounded to the nearest 100th.

Year	N	$(K-N)/K$	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	575			
2				
3				
4	300			
5				
6				
7	700			
8				
9				
10				

- Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity?
- Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%?
- Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached?
- Graph the results of the study.



\*Note: All values for population, carrying capacity, and biotic potential are fictional. They do not represent actual values.

# Raptor Population Ecology Funsheet

## Study 5: barn owl *Tyto alba*

Carrying capacity (K): 5,000

Maximum rate of increase ( $r_{\max}$ ): 0.06

Population (N): 2,750

### Background:

During the fourth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 4,000.

During the seventh year of the study there was emigration. The population decreased to 3,500.

During the ninth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 3,950.

Note: Answers need to be rounded to the nearest 100th.

Year	N	$(K-N)/K$	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	2,750			
2				
3				
4	4,000			
5				
6				
7	3,500			
8				
9	3,950			
10				

- Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity?
- Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%?
- Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached?
- Graph the results of the study.



\*Note: All values for population, carrying capacity, and biotic potential are fictional. They do not represent actual values.

# Raptor Population Ecology Funsheet

## Study 6: golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*

Carrying capacity (K): 2,500

Maximum rate of increase ( $r_{\max}$ ): 0.05

Population (N): 1,000

### Background:

During the third year of the study there was emigration. The population decreased to 750.

During the sixth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 1,500.

During the ninth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 2,000.

Note: Answers need to be rounded to the nearest 100th.

Year	N	$(K-N)/K$	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	1,000			
2				
3	750			
4				
5				
6	1,500			
7				
8				
9	2,000			
10				

- Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity?
- Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%?
- Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached?
- Graph the results of the study.



\*Note: All values for population, carrying capacity, and biotic potential are fictional. They do not represent actual values.

# Raptor Population Ecology Funsheet

## Study 7: Harris hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*

Carrying capacity (K): 5,000

Maximum rate of increase ( $r_{\max}$ ): 0.04

Population (N): 3,750

### Background:

During the fourth year of the study there was emigration. The population decreased to 2,500.

During the seventh year of the study there was emigration. The population decreased to 1,750.

During the ninth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 2,000.

Note: Answers need to be rounded to the nearest 100th.

Year	N	$(K-N)/K$	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	3,750			
2				
3				
4	2,500			
5				
6				
7	1,750			
8				
9	2,000			
10				

- Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity?
- Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%?
- Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached?
- Graph the results of the study.



\*Note: All values for population, carrying capacity, and biotic potential are fictional. They do not represent actual values.

# Raptor Population Ecology Funsheet

## Study 8: osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Carrying capacity (K): 4,000

Maximum rate of increase ( $r_{\max}$ ): 0.06

Population (N): 100

### Background:

During the third year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 1,000.

During the sixth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 1,300.

During the eighth year of the study there was immigration. The population increased to 2,250.

Note: Answers need to be rounded to the nearest 100th.

Year	N	$(K-N)/K$	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	100			
2				
3	1,000			
4				
5				
6	1,300			
7				
8	2,250			
9				
10				

- Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity?
- Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%?
- Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached?
- Graph the results of the study.



\*Note: All values for population, carrying capacity, and biotic potential are fictional. They do not represent actual values.

# Raptor Population Ecology Answer Sheet

## Study 1: bald eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	1,000	0.8	0.04	40
2	1,040	0.79	0.04	42
3	3,200	0.36	0.02	64
4	3,264	0.35	0.02	65
5	2,000	0.6	0.03	60
6	2,060	0.6	0.03	62
7	4,000	0.2	0.01	40
8	4,040	0.2	0.01	40
9	4,080	0.2	0.01	41
10	4,121	0.2	0.01	41

1. Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity? 10th year
2. Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%? 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th years
3. Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached? 1st and 2nd years

## Study 2: great horned owl *Bubo virginianus*

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	750	0.8	0.04	30
2	780	0.8	0.04	31
3	811	0.8	0.04	32
4	2,250	0.4	0.02	45
5	2,295	0.3	0.02	46
6	1,700	0.5	0.03	51
7	1,751	0.5	0.03	53
8	3,200	0.1	0.01	32
9	3,232	0.1	0.01	32
10	3,264	0.1	0.01	33

1. Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity? 10th year
2. Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%? 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, and 10th years
3. Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached? 1st, 2nd and 3rd years

# Raptor Population Ecology Answer Sheet

## Study 3: red-tailed hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	6,000	0.4	0.02	120
2	6,120	0.4	0.02	122
3	8,400	0.2	0.01	84
4	8,484	0.2	0.01	85
5	5,500	0.5	0.02	110
6	5,610	0.4	0.02	112
7	5,722	0.4	0.02	114
8	5,836	0.4	0.02	117
9	7,000	0.3	0.01	70
10	7070	0.3	0.01	71

1. Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity? 4th year
2. Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%? every year of the study (1-10)
3. Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached? None of the years had 75% or more of the carrying capacity left

## Study 4: screech owl *Otus asio*

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	575	0.4	0.01	6
2	581	0.4	0.01	6
3	587	0.4	0.01	6
4	300	0.7	0.02	6
5	306	0.7	0.02	6
6	700	0.3	0.01	7
7	707	0.3	0.01	7
8	714	0.3	0.01	7
9	721	0.3	0.01	7
10	728	0.3	0.01	7

1. Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity? 10th year
2. Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%? every year of the study (1-10)
3. Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached? None of the years of the study had 75% or more of the carrying capacity left

# Raptor Population Ecology Answer Sheet

## Study 5: barn owl *Tyto alba*

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	2,750	0.5	0.03	83
2	2,833	0.4	0.02	57
3	2,890	0.4	0.02	58
4	4,000	0.2	0.01	40
5	4,040	0.2	0.01	40
6	4,080	0.2	0.01	41
7	3,500	0.3	0.02	70
8	3,570	0.3	0.02	71
9	3,950	0.2	0.01	40
10	3990	0.2	0.01	40

1. Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity? 6th year
2. Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%? 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th
3. Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached? None of the years of the study had 75% or more of the carrying capacity left

## Study 6: golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos Canadensis*

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	1,000	0.6	0.03	30
2	1,030	0.6	0.03	31
3	750	0.7	0.04	30
4	780	0.7	0.04	31
5	811	0.7	0.04	32
6	1,500	0.4	0.02	30
7	1,530	0.4	0.02	31
8	1,561	0.4	0.02	31
9	2,000	0.2	0.01	20
10	2020	0.2	0.01	20

1. Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity? 10th year
2. Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%? 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th
3. Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached? None of the years of the study had 75% or more of the carrying capacity left

# Raptor Population Ecology Answer Sheet

## Study 7: Harris hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	3,750	0.3	0.01	38
2	3,788	0.2	0.01	38
3	3,826	0.2	0.01	38
4	2,500	0.5	0.02	50
5	2,550	0.5	0.02	51
6	2,601	0.5	0.02	52
7	1,750	0.7	0.03	53
8	1,803	0.6	0.02	36
9	2,000	0.6	0.02	40
10	2040	0.6	0.02	41

1. Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity? 3rd year
2. Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%? 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th, 9th, and 10th years
3. Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached? None of the years of the study had 75% or more of the carrying capacity left

## Study 8: osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Year	N	(K-N)/K	$r_{\max}$	$\Delta N$
1	100	1	0.06	6
2	106	1	0.06	6
3	1,000	0.8	0.05	50
4	1,050	0.7	0.04	42
5	1,092	0.7	0.04	44
6	1,300	0.7	0.04	52
7	1,352	0.7	0.04	54
8	2,250	0.4	0.02	45
9	2,295	0.4	0.02	46
10	2341	0.4	0.02	47

1. Which year of the study came closest to the carrying capacity? 10th year
2. Which year(s) of the study was the increase in raptor population less than or equal to 2%? 8th, 9th, and 10th years
3. Which year(s) of the study was there 75% or more left until the carrying capacity was reached? 3rd year