



# The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

## Reading Item and Scoring Sampler

# SUPPLEMENT

2009–2010  
Grade 11

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# READING

## ***INTRODUCTION***

The 2009–2010 Reading Item and Scoring Sampler Supplement displays released items from the 2009 PSSA operational test. The sampler supplement is to be used in conjunction with the previous year’s sampler. The 2008–2009 Reading Item and Scoring Sampler can be found on the PDE website at <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/>. Select the “Pre K–12 Schools” tab at the top of the page. Then select “Assessment” in the “Learn About” column to the left. Select “Resource Materials” in the “Learn About” column of the next page, and then scroll down to find the appropriate sampler. Alternately, you may type in or click this link to reach the location of the item samplers:  
[http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a\\_and\\_t/cwp/view.asp?a=108&Q=73314&a\\_and\\_tNav=680|&a\\_and\\_tNav=](http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/cwp/view.asp?a=108&Q=73314&a_and_tNav=680|&a_and_tNav=)

This item and scoring sampler supplement contains multiple-choice items and an open-ended item. Each item is preceded by the Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content coding. The multiple-choice answer options are followed by a list of rationales. The correct answer is indicated by an asterisk. The table following each multiple-choice item displays the percentages of students who chose each answer option. The correct answer is also shaded in these tables. The table following the open-ended item indicates the students’ performance at each score point. Sample student responses for each of the scoring levels are also included for the open-ended item.

## READING

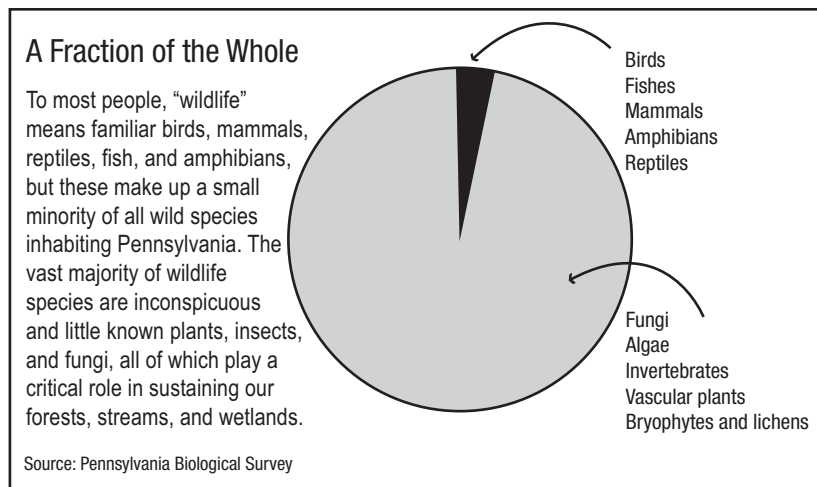
### READING PASSAGE

Read the following passage about Pennsylvania's need to better understand its wildlife. Then answer questions 1–8.

# A Gap in Understanding

by Ben Moyer

More than 25,000 species live in Pennsylvania's woods, fields, and streams. Among these, we know best the large, conspicuous plants and animals like oak trees, deer, wild turkeys, and smallmouth bass. Yet these familiar neighbors in our living world make up only a minor fraction of the ecological communities around us. In every woodlot, stream, and pond across Pennsylvania, an interconnected community of plants, insects and fungi, as well as fish, mammals, amphibians, and birds, carry on the processes of life that make this part of the earth so hospitable to human life. Without the daily, hourly striving of all these organisms to capture energy and reproduce their kind, there would be no soil on the land, no forests on the soil, and no clean water flowing perpetually across our valleys to the sea.



More than ever, we understand that ecosystems are complex, and their stability depends on a full and diverse complement of living things. We are learning that when species disappear from these systems, the loss can trigger changes we did not expect.

Despite this wider understanding, the gaps in our knowledge about the abundance of wild populations, where they live in the state, and how they depend upon one another are wide and glaring. Our knowledge gap about Pennsylvania's native biology is a case in which what we don't know can hurt us.

Birds are the only group of vertebrates in our state whose population trends have been carefully investigated. These studies have yielded important knowledge about the health of some species, but we still know very little of the status and trends of at least half of our nesting birds. For the other wildlife, the 397 species of Pennsylvania mammals, reptiles, amphibians, mussels, and fish, our knowledge is even less adequate.

Of Pennsylvania's 186 nesting bird species, 21 (11 percent) are imperiled, meaning they are in imminent danger of being lost from the state. Sixteen of our bird species are officially listed as threatened or endangered, and six of Pennsylvania's native birds, including the passenger pigeon and heath hen, have been lost from the state or are gone forever.

## READING

Even our limited knowledge of birds underscores the link between wildlife abundance and suitable habitat. Many of our imperiled birds, such as the American bittern, king rail, and yellow-crowned night heron must have access to healthy wetlands to nest and thrive. In Pennsylvania and elsewhere, as wetlands have been filled, drained or otherwise destroyed, these birds have declined or disappeared. Similarly, forest birds such as the scarlet tanager, wood thrush and the Blackburnian and worm-eating warblers need large tracts of forest if they are to remain a colorful and important part of Pennsylvania's wildlife. These birds and other interior forest species have declined as forests are developed or fragmented by roads, towers, and utility rights-of-way.

Since the 1960s, development, intensive cultivation, conversion from hay to row crops, and reverting woodland have claimed most of the grassland habitat remaining in the state, and populations of bobwhite quail, ring-necked pheasants and other grassland birds have plummeted. These birds were once the center of an annual autumn spectacle, summoning hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvania hunters and their dogs to the tawny fields. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that pheasants have declined by four percent per year in Pennsylvania since 1980. Besides their popularity as a game bird, quail were once well known to gardeners and country youngsters across the state. Quail have declined by 80 percent since the mid-1960s and their "bobwhite" call is seldom heard.

The number of Pennsylvanians who hunt pheasants has dropped by nearly half, from 275,000 to 146,000 since 1990, possibly reflecting the decline in pheasant populations. An autumn field, coursed by pointers and flecked with hunter-orange, is a rare sight today in Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, meadowlarks, bobolinks, grasshopper sparrows and nearly all other grassland birds are in rapid decline in

the face of sprawl and intensive cultivation of remaining lands.

We understand the needs and the role of birds better than any other group of wildlife. For most wild species—plants, insects, fungi, and amphibians—we lack a reliable sense of their abundance or their distribution across the state. As sprawl and development claim more land, and as remaining habitats are fragmented and isolated, understanding where a species lives, and why, is critical to its conservation.

Despite large areas of land reserved for conservation in some regions of Pennsylvania, many species' habitats remain vulnerable and unprotected. One example is the bog turtle, an endangered species in the state.

The bog turtle depends on undisturbed wetlands, connected by natural marshy corridors that allow these small reptiles to travel over miles of interconnected habitats to keep their populations thriving. Nearly all remaining habitat for the bog turtle is in southeastern counties, increasingly surrounded by sprawl, roads, and intensive cultivation that block travel corridors and isolate turtles in patches of habitat. Bog turtles have declined by 50 percent in Pennsylvania in the last two decades, with habitat loss and alteration the primary culprit. Without intervention, healthy, unfragmented wetlands will continue to dwindle and bog turtle populations will continue their decline.

Similarly, the only known habitats for the green salamander in the state are moist sandstone outcrops surrounded by forest found only in southwestern Pennsylvania. Other species may be equally rare or isolated, and effective conservation programs will depend on a better understanding of their distribution and habitat needs. For the bog turtle and the green salamander, their unique but diminishing habitat lies at the fringe of advancing urban sprawl, representing a critical conservation need.

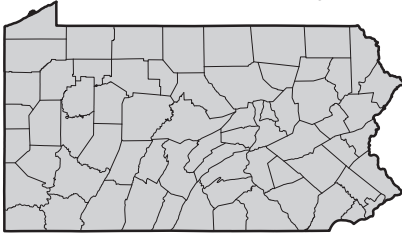
## READING

### Where and Why

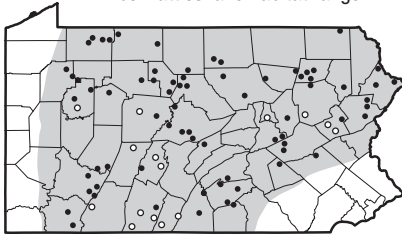
Climate, soils, elevation, and topography influence which species inhabit the state and where they occur. For example, the gray squirrel (*top*) can live under a wide range of conditions, and its adaptability is reflected in its broad range across the state. Timber rattlesnakes (*center*), however, require rocky hillsides and dry upland forests, which restricts this species' range to the more mountainous parts of the state. The green salamander (*bottom*) is a species of the southern Appalachian Mountains that has never been widespread or abundant in the state but reaches the natural northern limit of its range in southwestern Pennsylvania.

If wild species with specialized habitat requirements, such as the rattlesnake and green salamander, are to survive in the state, we must identify the location of suitable habitats and work with landowners or public agencies to protect these sites where they occur.

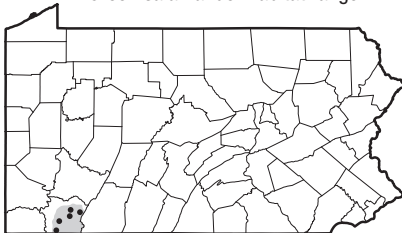
Gray squirrel habitat range



Timber rattlesnake habitat range



Green salamander habitat range



- Voucher specimen available or specimen observed
- Selected records reported by Pennsylvania Herpetological Atlas Project

Source: Amphibians and Reptiles of Pennsylvania, Arthur C. Hulse, C.J. McCoy, Ellen J. Censky, Cornell University Press, 2001

Even though we have not allocated adequate resources to understanding wildlife and its needs, the trends that we have studied serve as a sobering indicator of environmental health in Pennsylvania today. There may be no better example than our freshwater mussels, one of the most globally imperiled groups of wildlife. Freshwater clams, riffleshells, and mussels once lived on the bottoms of streams and rivers throughout what is now our Commonwealth, supporting fish populations and furnishing food and tools to native cultures. Today, 18 of our original 65 species of freshwater mussels are extinct. Among the 47 survivors, 22 species, or 46 percent, are currently imperiled by pollution, dams, and invasion by foreign species. Freshwater clams in the streams of Penn's Woods once meant food for the Lenape, Susquehannock, and Seneca peoples. For us, their decline points out the vulnerability of our aquatic habitats.

Fish are one of our best indicators of the health of aquatic environments. However, we do not have adequate monitoring programs in place to determine trends in most fish populations. Habitat assessments contracted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) indicate that only 14 percent of Pennsylvania stream miles provide good habitat for fish, and our native fish populations seem to reflect that degradation. Nearly 200 species of native fish once swam in Pennsylvania waters. Twenty-seven of these are already extinct, and another 45 (26 percent) of the surviving species are imperiled.

Some Pennsylvania fishes occur only in certain river drainages. Their restricted range makes them more vulnerable to loss and presents special challenges in conservation. A better understanding of these native fishes and their habitat requirements would not only help to sustain them in the state, but also would yield important knowledge about sustaining the river systems that we rely on for our clean water and recreation.

## READING

Biologists do have a good understanding of population trends, habitat needs and distribution of game species such as deer, bear, and wild turkeys that are the keystone of Pennsylvania's hunting tradition. Hunting license sales provide funding for research on these species and population trends can be obtained by analyzing hunter harvests. These species, however, represent only a fraction of Pennsylvania's wildlife. The vast majority of wildlife faces a wide range of threats, and all have habitat requirements that we scarcely understand.

### **MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS**

**Note: All percentages listed in the tables below the items have been rounded.**

#### **A.2.2.1**

1. In which word does "in-" mean the same as it does in "inconspicuous"?
- A insignificant \*
  - B infantry
  - C initial
  - D intermission

The student is asked to determine which word has the same meaning for the prefix "in-" as the word "inconspicuous" from the passage. In the tested word, the prefix "in-" means "not." In option A, "insignificant" means "not significant," making it the correct answer. In options B, C, and D, the prefix has different meanings.

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
87%	5%	4%	3%

## READING

### A.2.1.1

2. In which sentence does the word critical mean the same as it does in the passage?
- A The instructor led students through a critical analysis of their essays.
  - B Flooding in the southern regions of the country has reached a critical state.
  - C A contingency plan for emergency situations is critical for medical facilities. \*
  - D Even though the mayor’s speech was well received, the mayor’s opponent was critical of the performance.

The student is asked to determine which sentence uses the word “critical” in the same way the word is used in the passage. Since “critical” has multiple meanings, the student has to distinguish between the different meanings based on context. The word “critical” as used in the passage means “crucial,” which is the same meaning as option C, the correct answer. Options A, B, and D have different meanings for the word.

A	B	C	D
5%	22%	67%	5%

### A.2.4.1

3. What is the main idea of the passage?
- A Native species will survive if development and urban sprawl are halted.
  - B Hunters are beneficial to many game species in Pennsylvania.
  - C Many of the species in Pennsylvania are competing for habitats.
  - D Too little is known about most of the species that live in Pennsylvania. \*

The student is asked to determine the main idea of the passage. Option D reflects the author’s main argument that residents of Pennsylvania should know more about the native biology living in the state. Options A, B, and C contain general statements or specific details found in the passage that are not main ideas.

A	B	C	D
23%	4%	25%	48%

## READING

### A.2.3.2

4. Which statement from the passage **best** supports the generalization that conservation is important to people?
- A “Of Pennsylvania’s 186 nesting bird species, 21 (11 percent) are imperiled . . .”
  - B “For most wild species . . . we lack a reliable sense of their abundance or their distribution across the state.”
  - C “. . . when species disappear from these systems, the loss can trigger changes we did not expect.” \*
  - D “Fish are one of our best indicators of the health of aquatic environments.”

The student is asked to choose which sentence best supports a generalization about the importance of conservation to people. Option C supports the generalization by relating a possible consequence of species loss to people. Options A and D are both about specific animal species, and option B does not address the importance of conservation.

A	B	C	D
8%	21%	62%	9%

### B.3.3.2

5. How does the choice of text organization help make the author’s point?
- A The text organization breaks a large problem into smaller ones. \*
  - B The text organization shows the reader how to take action to solve the problem.
  - C The text organization highlights the history of the problem.
  - D The text organization reveals many perspectives on the problem.

The student is asked to analyze the author’s decisions about text organization. Option A best explains the author’s strategy of first describing the large problem and then breaking the problem down into its different parts. Options B, C, and D do not accurately reveal the purpose of the passage.

A	B	C	D
45%	10%	14%	31%

## READING

### A.2.4.1

6. According to the passage, how do Pennsylvania hunters help protect wildlife?
- A Hunting license fees pay for studies of animals. \*
  - B Preserves for hunters safeguard wildlife habitats.
  - C Hunters eliminate overpopulation of certain animals.
  - D Decreased hunting means fewer animals are killed.

The student is asked to identify a relevant detail from the passage. The idea presented in option A — that “hunting license fees pay for studies” — is stated in the final paragraph of the passage. Options B, C, and D do not correctly answer the question based on the information presented in the passage.

A	B	C	D
52%	10%	25%	12%

### B.3.3.3

7. Which of the author’s viewpoints is illustrated in the graphic “A Fraction of the Whole”?
- A The majority of wildlife species are not well known. \*
  - B Most of the wildlife species in the state are familiar animals.
  - C Well-known wildlife species are the most important to ecosystems.
  - D Inconspicuous species play a minor role in sustaining our environment.

The student is asked to identify which of the author’s viewpoints is illustrated in the first graphic. The graphic highlights the idea that the largest portions of Pennsylvania’s wildlife are “little known plants, insects, and fungi,” which supports the statement in option A. Options B, C, and D do not accurately reflect the author’s viewpoint in the graphic.

A	B	C	D
66%	9%	9%	15%



# READING

## **ITEM-SPECIFIC SCORING GUIDELINE**

### **Item # 8**

**This item is reported under Category B, Interpretation and Analysis of Fictional and Nonfictional Text.**

#### **Assessment Anchor:**

B.3– Understand concepts and organization of nonfictional text.

#### **Specific Eligible Content addressed by this item:**

B.3.1.1– Explain, interpret, describe, and/or analyze the use of facts and opinions to make a point or construct an argument in non-fictional text.

#### **Scoring Guide:**

Score	In response to this item, the student—
3	demonstrates <i>complete</i> knowledge of understanding how the use of facts and opinions are used to construct an argument by explaining how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected and by using at least two examples from the passage to support the explanation.
2	demonstrates <i>partial</i> knowledge of understanding how the use of facts and opinions are used to construct an argument by explaining how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected and by using one example from the passage to support the explanation. (Example: Student explains how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected and uses one example from the passage to support the explanation).
1	demonstrates <i>incomplete</i> knowledge of understanding how the use of facts and opinions are used to construct an argument by explaining how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected without providing any examples. (Example: Student explains how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected without using any examples from the passage to support the explanation.)
0	gives a response that provides <i>insufficient</i> material for scoring or is inaccurate in all aspects.
Non-scorable	BLK (blank)... No response or written refusal to respond or response too brief to determine response OT..... Off task/topic LOE..... Response in a language other than English IL..... Illegible

#### **Example—Top Scoring Response (3 Points):**

<b>Explanation and Examples</b>
The author uses facts to influence the reader’s emotional call to action. For example, the author cites the fact that eleven percent of Pennsylvania’s nesting bird species are “imperiled” and to further convince the reader that native species should be protected, the author goes on to define the word “imperiled” as “meaning they [the birds] are in imminent danger of being lost . . .” Another example is the fact that the population of bog turtles has declined by fifty percent because of habitat loss. The author grimly notes, “Without intervention . . . wetlands will continue to dwindle and bog turtle populations will continue their decline.”

## READING

### OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES

#### B.3.1.1 Response Score 3

8. Explain how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected. Use at least two examples from the passage to support your explanation.

Ben Moyer is clearly zealous about Pennsylvania's wildlife and is devoted to promoting conservation. Throughout his passage <u>A Gap in Understanding</u> , Moyer describes specific cases in which species are declining in numbers. "Our knowledge gap about Pennsylvania's native biology is a case in which what we don't know can hurt us." He believes that we should learn more about how we can protect our native wildlife, mainly by analyzing the statistics of deteriorating species around our own region, such as the eleven percent of nesting birds that are "imperiled."
Moyer then tries to show that protecting the species will have great benefits. According to Moyer, "a better understanding of these native fishes and their habitat requirements would not only help to sustain them in the state, but also would yield important knowledge about sustaining the river system..."
Moyer is very effective in convincing his readers to protect the native species by showing that the pro's would outweigh the con's.

The student has given a complete answer to the task by explaining how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected ("... Moyer describes specific cases in which species are declining in numbers," "by analyzing the statistics of deteriorating species around our own region," "Moyer then tries to show that protecting the species will have great benefits," and "by showing that the pro's would outweigh the con's") and by using at least two examples from the passage ("Our knowledge gap about Pennsylvania's native biology is a case in which what we don't know can hurt us" and "... the eleven percent of nesting birds that are 'imperiled'") to support the explanation.

## READING

### B.3.1.1 Response Score 2

8. Explain how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected. Use at least two examples from the passage to support your explanation.

The author thoroughly tries to convince us that the native species should be protected. The author states in the passage that when species disappear from the systems, the loss can trigger changes we did not expect. Without these organisms a very large part of our lives could be impacted, such as no clean water flowing. The author also explains that without these species, hunting license sales will decrease. With a decline in the sales funding for research on species and population trends will no longer be obtainable. The author truly does make some valid points, and with a decline in the species, our lives could easily be affected greatly.

The student has given a partial answer to the task by explaining how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected (“The author states . . . that when species disappear from the systems, the loss can trigger changes we did not expect”) and by using one example from the passage (“ . . . without these species, hunting license sales will decrease. With a decline in the sales funding for research on species and population trends will no longer be obtainable”) to support the explanation.

## READING

### B.3.1.1 Response Score 2

8. Explain how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected. Use at least two examples from the passage to support your explanation.

The author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected by telling the reader about specific species and then how fast their population is decreasing such as "Quail have declined by 80 percent since the mid 1960s."

The author also tells us about the extinct and endangered species to show the reader what could happen if the species are not protected and continue to have habitat loss. Showing the reader what has happened to a species are two effective ways to convince the reader that native species should be protected.

The student has given a partial answer to the task by explaining how the author attempts to convince the reader that native species should be protected ("... by telling the reader about specific species and then how fast their population is decreasing..." and "The author also tells us about the extinct and endangered species...") and by using one example from the passage ("'Quail have declined by 80 percent since the mid 1960s'") to support the explanation.







# READING

## ***SUMMATIVE DATA TABLE***

### **Multiple-Choice Items**

<b>Sampler Sequence</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>1</b>	87%	5%	4%	3%
<b>2</b>	5%	22%	67%	5%
<b>3</b>	23%	4%	25%	48%
<b>4</b>	8%	21%	62%	9%
<b>5</b>	45%	10%	14%	31%
<b>6</b>	52%	10%	25%	12%
<b>7</b>	66%	9%	9%	15%

### **Open-Ended Item**

<b>Sampler Sequence</b>	<b>Score Point 3</b>	<b>Score Point 2</b>	<b>Score Point 1</b>	<b>Score Point 0</b>
<b>8</b>	23%	49%	21%	7%

## READING

### Acknowledgements

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**Reading  
Grade 11  
Item and Scoring Sampler Supplement**

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