
C12T7P1 测试练习

Flying tortoises

An airborne reintroduction programme has helped conservationist take significant steps to protect the endangered Galapagos tortoise.

A Forests of spiny _____ cacti _____ cover much of the uneven _____ lava _____ plains _____ that separate the interior of the Galapagos island of Isabela from the Pacific Ocean. With its five distinct _____ volcanoes, the island resembles a lunar _____ landscape _____. Only the thick vegetation _____ at the skirt _____ of the often cloud-covered peak _____ of Sierra Negra offers respite _____ from the barren terrain _____ below. This inhospitable _____ environment is home to the giant Galapagos tortoise. Some time after the Galapagos' s birth, around five million years ago, the islands were colonized by one or more tortoises from mainland south America. As these ancestral tortoises settled on the individual islands, the different populations adapted to their unique environments, giving rise to _____ at least 14 different subspecies _____. Island life agreed with them. In the absence _____ of significant predators _____, they grew to become the largest and longest-living tortoises on the planet, weighing _____ more than 400 kilograms, occasionally exceeding 1.8 metres in length and living for

more than a century.

B Before human arrival, the archipelago's _____ tortoises numbered in the hundreds of thousands. From the 17th century onwards, pirates _____ took a few on board for food, but the arrival of whaling ships _____ in the 1790s saw this exploitation _____ grow exponentially _____. Relatively immobile and capable _____ of surviving for months without food or water, the tortoises were taken on board these ships to act as food supplies during long ocean passages _____. Sometimes, their bodies were processed _____ into high-grade _____ oil. In total, an estimated 200,000 animals were taken from the archipelago settlers came to the islands. They hunted the tortoises and destroyed their habitat to clear _____ land for agriculture. They also introduced alien species _____ -ranging from cattle _____, pigs, goats _____, rats _____ and dogs to plants and ants-that either prey on the eggs and young tortoise or damage or destroy their habitat.

C Today, only 11 of the original subspecies survive and of these, several are highly endangered. In 1989, work began on a tortoise-breeding centre just outside the town of Puerto Villamil on Isabela, dedicated to protecting the island's tortoise populations. The centre's captive-breeding _____ programme proved to be extremely successful, and it eventually had to deal with an overpopulation _____

problem.

D The problem was also a pressing _____ one. Captive-bred tortoises can't be reintroduced _____ into the wild until they're at least five years old and weigh at least 4.5 kilograms, at which point their size and weight - and their hardened _____ shells _____ - are sufficient to protect them from predators. But if people wait too long after that point, the tortoises eventually become too large to transport.

E For years, repatriation _____ efforts were carried out in small numbers, with the tortoises carried on the backs of men _____ over weeks of long, treacherous _____ hikes along narrow trails _____. But in November 2010, the environmentalist and Galapagos National Park liaison officer Godfrey Merlin, a visiting private motor yacht captain _____ and a helicopter pilot _____ gathered around a table in a small café in Puerto Ayora on the island of Santa Cruz to work out more ambitious reintroduction. The aim was to use a helicopter to move 300 of the breeding centre's tortoises to various locations close to Sierra Negra.

F This unprecedented _____ effort was made possible by the owners of the 67-metre yacht white cloud, who provided the Galapagos National Park with free use of their helicopter and its experienced pilot, as well as the logistical _____ support of the yacht, its captain and crew. Originally an air ambulance _____, the yacht's helicopter has a

rear _____ double door and a large internal space that's well suited for cargo, so a custom _____ crate _____ was designed to hold up _____ to 33 tortoises with a total weight of about 150 kilograms. This weight, together with that of the fuel, pilot and four crew, approached the helicopter's maximum payload _____, and there were times when it was clearly right on the edge of the helicopter's capabilities. During a period of three days, a group of volunteers from the breeding centre worked around the clock _____ to prepare the young tortoises for transport. Meanwhile, park wardens _____, dropped off ahead of time in remote _____ locations, cleared landing sites within the thick brush, cacti and lava rocks.

G Upon their release _____, the juvenile _____ tortoises quickly spread out over their ancestral territory _____, investigating their new surroundings and feeding on _____ the vegetation. Eventually, one tiny _____ tortoise came across a fully grown giant who had been lumbering _____ around the island for around a hundred years. the two stood side by side _____, a powerful symbol _____ of the regeneration _____ of an ancient species.