

## 14.3

## Population Density and Distribution

**KEY CONCEPT** Each population has a density, a dispersion, and a reproductive strategy.

## VOCABULARY

population density  
population dispersion  
survivorship curve

## MAIN IDEAS

- Population density is the number of individuals that live in a defined area.
- Geographic dispersion of a population shows how individuals in a population are spaced.
- Survivorship curves help to describe the reproductive strategy of a species.

## Connect to Your World

If you have ever traveled from a rural area into a city, you may have noticed a change in population density. Cities have more dense populations, while rural areas have more widely dispersed populations. Scientists measure species populations in a similar way. What can we learn from population data?

## MAIN IDEA

## Population density is the number of individuals that live in a defined area.

The wandering albatross may fly over open ocean waters for days or weeks at a time without ever encountering another bird. In contrast to this solitary lifestyle, elephant seals may gather in groups of a thousand or more on California beaches. By collecting data about a population in a particular area, scientists can calculate the density of a population. **Population density** is a measurement of the number of individuals living in a defined space.

Calculating an accurate population density can tell scientists a great deal about a species. When scientists notice changes in population densities over time, they work to determine whether the changes are the result of environmental factors or are simply due to normal variation in the life history of a species. In this way a wildlife biologist can work to make changes that will help to keep the population healthy. One way to calculate population density is to create a ratio of the number of individuals that live in a particular area to the size of the area. This formula is simplified as follows:

$$\frac{\text{# of individuals}}{\text{area (square km)}} = \text{population density}$$

For example, if scientists sampling a population of deer counted 200 individuals in an area of 10 square kilometers, the density of this deer population would be 20 deer per square kilometer.

**Connect:** What might a decrease in the density of a deer population over a specific time period tell scientists about the habitat in the area?

## CONNECT TO

## GENE FLOW

Recall that in the chapter *The Evolution of Populations*, you learned about gene flow and geographic isolation. Population dispersion patterns influence the rate of gene flow among and between species.

## 14 3 Population Density And Distribution Answer Key

**Chao Zhang**

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