

Student Comprehension Worksheet

Directions: Read the online *Science News* article "[A toxin behind mysterious eagle die-offs may have finally been found](#)," which explores scientists' quest to ID a suspect in mass bird deaths, and answer the following questions. A version of the story, "Elusive killer in eagle die-offs ID'd," appears in the April 24, 2021 issue of *Science News*.

- 1. What types of birds have died in massive numbers around lakes in the southeast United States? When did the die-offs start?**
- 2. What behavioral observations did scientists make about the birds before and after the animals' deaths? How were the observations connected?**
- 3. What disease did scientist classify the birds as having?**
- 4. What invasive plant did scientists find around lakes where die-offs took place? Based on this observation, what hypothesis did aquatic ecologist Susan Wilde come up with that might explain the die-offs?**
- 5. How did Wilde and colleagues test this hypothesis in the lab? Describe each step and the evidence that the researchers gathered from it.**
- 6. Why did Wilde's team take their investigation from the laboratory to the field?**
- 7. What did the researchers find during their fieldwork? Explain how the discovery led to an additional procedural step and evidence.**
- 8. How did the invasive plant play a role in the die-offs? Explain.**

9. Why did birds that didn't eat the plant get vacuolar myelinopathy, or VM?

10. What does Wilde's team plan to do next?