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Scientists Aim to Bring Back Extinct Tasmanian Tiger

Scientists are hoping that an animal which has been extinct for over eight decades could be brought back to life.

The company Colossal Biosciences is working with the University of Melbourne to try and resurrect the thylacine.

The thylacine was a small marsupial. A little larger than a fox, they were yellowish-brown and had distinctive stripes across their fur. It is often called a Tasmanian wolf or a Tasmanian tiger.

Although they once roamed across much of Australia, the last remaining thylacines were only found on the island of Tasmania. Considered a pest, these were hunted by humans until no more survived.

The last known Tasmanian tiger died in captivity in 1936.

However, work has begun on trying to bring the species back to life. The team plan to take cells from a species that has similar DNA. They will then edit these cells to bring back thylacines.

Professor Andrew Pask is the project research leader from the University of Melbourne. He said: "I now believe that in 10 years' time we could have our first living baby thylacine since they were hunted to extinction close to a century ago."

By reintroducing Tasmanian tigers, the team say that it could help rebalance the ecosystem. They suggest thylacines would help balance the food chain. They'd do this by hunting small animals that would otherwise eat too much plant life.

The Tasmanian tiger isn't the only animal Colossal Biosciences is hoping to bring back to life.

Photo: Thylacine.

Last year, they revealed their plan to try and resurrect woolly mammoths.

By taking cells from Asian elephants and combining them with mammoth DNA, they hope to create an elephant-mammoth hybrid.

They claim that the project could be a way of helping protect the endangered Asian elephant.

What is DNA?

- **DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid. It's found inside all cells.**

- **DNA carries all the information about what a living thing will look like or how it will grow. For example, DNA is responsible for a bird having wings, an elephant having a long trunk and the colour of your eyes.**

They say it could also help restore some Arctic habitat and help fight climate change too. If the elephant-mammoth hybrids knocked down trees, it would make space for more Arctic grassland to grow. This could help absorb some greenhouse gases.

Glossary

resurrect	Bring back something that has disappeared.
marsupial	Animals that carry and raise their young in a pouch.
distinctive	A special part of something that makes it recognisable.
cells	The smallest living parts of a plant or animal.

Questions

1. What type of animal was the Tasmanian tiger?

   _____

2. The main idea of the article is... **(tick one)**

   Wooly mammoths are coming back.

   Humans hunted thylacine to extinction.

   Scientists are working on bringing some extinct animals back to life.

   Scientists have brought tigers and elephants back to life.

3. Look at the sentence beginning: **Although they once roamed...** Find and copy a word which means the same as 'an animal that damages food supplies or crops'.

   _____

4. Tick to show whether the statement is a fact or an opinion.

	Fact	Opinion
People hunted thylacines.		
Bringing back extinct animals is a great idea.		
Thylacines became extinct over 80 years ago.		
DNA is fascinating.		

5. What does DNA stand for?

   _____

6. Give the meaning of the word 'endangered ' as it is used in this sentence: **They claim that the project could be a way of helping protect the endangered Asian elephant.**

   _____

   _____

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