

8. GONE TODAY, HERE TOMORROW

In Jurassic Park-like fashion, scientists have been attempting to bring recently-extinct species back from the dead, so to speak. The 5 April 2013 journal *Science* reported that the first live product of de-extinction, a Pyrenean ibex, lasted only a few minutes before extinguishing again. The ibex, which was produced by a process similar to that used for Dolly, the infamous cloned sheep, was driven to extinction in the first place with the help of humans. Some scientists think it only fitting that humans play a part in the de-extinction of those species that we helped to extinct in the first place.

An environmental argument for de-extinction arises from the case of the woolly mammoth, a species whose de-extinction would likely have beneficial consequences, such as the restoration of a more diverse ecology in the Arctic. Unfortunately for dinosaur enthusiasts, species of dinosaurs are not contenders for de-extinction at the moment, as the processes for de-extinction that are currently available require “fresher” DNA. And some notable environmental scientists are concerned about the unforeseen effects of reintroducing a de-extincted species into an environment, much like the unforeseen effects of introducing non-native species of plants or animals into novel environments. One might also wonder whether de-extincted creatures fall under endangered species laws and whether it is appropriate to use the term ‘extinct’ for species from this time forward, given that de-extinction is an imminent possibility.

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