

All About Extinct Animals



What Causes Extinction?



Extinction can happen over time due to natural factors, such as changes in climates or natural disasters like volcanic eruptions or meteors.

Any species normally has a lifespan and usually lasts 500 000 to 1 million years. Scientists know this from studying fossils. Fossils and geology also give us clues about large extinctions of species that have happened all around the same time. These are called mass extinctions.



The 'Big Five' Mass Extinctions

Now and again, in the history of our planet, there have been waves of mass extinction – officially five up until now...

Name	When?	Level of Extinction
End Ordovician	444 million years ago	86%
Late Devonian	375 million years ago	75%
End Permian	251 million years ago	96%
End Triassic	200 million years ago	80%
End Cretaceous	66 million years ago	76%

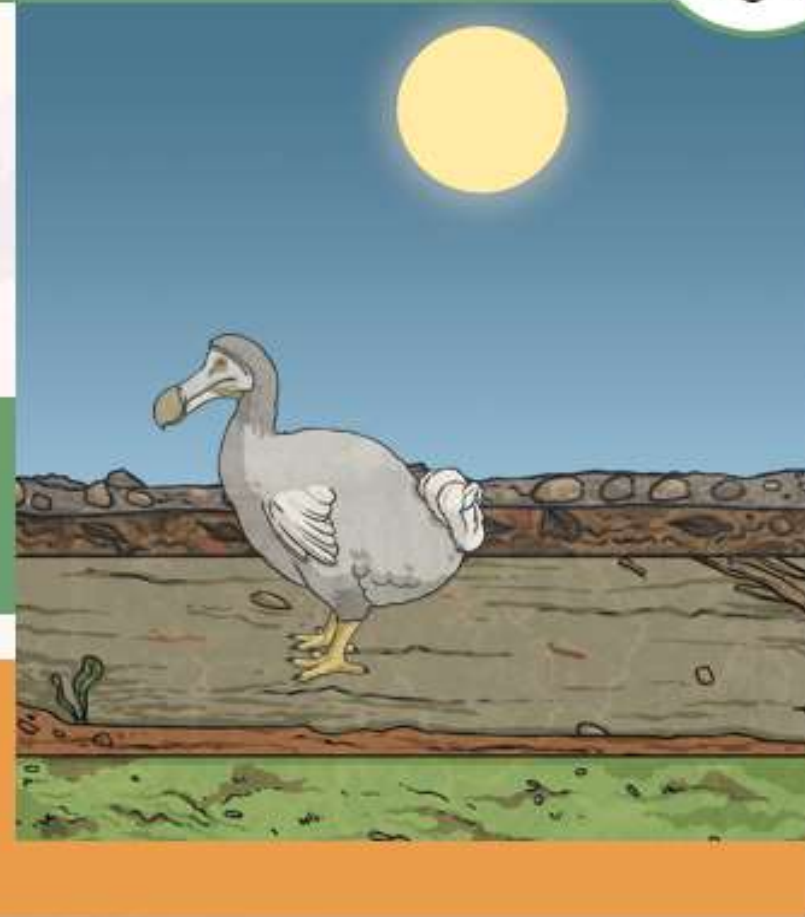
The Sixth Mass Extinction



We are now in the Cenozoic era and in what scientists are calling the sixth mass extinction. This sixth mass extinction is being labelled as the Holocene or the **Anthropocene extinction**.

If **anthropology** is the study of human society, what do you think the Anthropocene extinction refers to?

The Anthropocene extinction refers to a mass extinction caused by human activity. What sort of human activity could this include?



Human Activity

Discuss what things humans do or can do, to cause animals or plants to become extinct or in danger of extinction. When you have thought, check your answers below.

hunt or poach animals

create greenhouse gases that cause global warming

other activities that create climate change

pollute habitats with poisons or plastics

destroy habitats through deforestation

introduce non-native species to areas that have a negative effect on the native species (like the red squirrel)

Extinct Animals



Dodo



Woolly
Mammoth



West African
Black Rhino



Great Auk



Saber-
Toothed
Cat



Diplodocus



Can We Stop
Extinction?

Dodo

(Raphus Cacullatus)

This is the animal behind the phrase 'as dead as a dodo', meaning it's gone... just like the dodo.

Fact File

Size: 1m tall

Weight: 10 – 18kg

Habitat: Mauritius

Diet: seeds, roots and fallen fruits

Reason for extinction: It was hunted by sailors for its meat and preyed upon by animals.

Last seen: 1662

Interesting fact: The dodo was a flightless bird.



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Woolly Mammoth

(Mammuthus Primigenius)

Fact File

Size: 4m tall and more

Weight: 6 tonnes

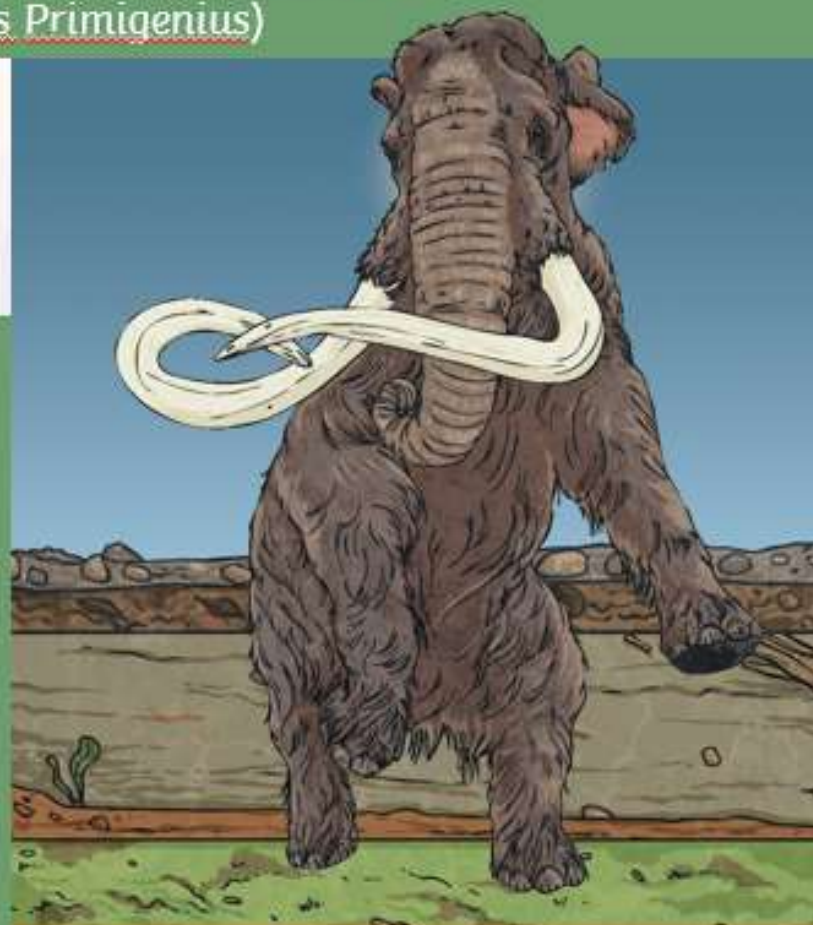
Habitat: It came from Africa to North America and Eurasia.

Diet: grazed on grass

Reason for extinction: It was hunted by humans and it lost its habitat.

Last seen: Wrangel Island in the Arctic Ocean around 1700 BC

Interesting fact: Its tusks were up to 5m long!



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West African Black Rhino

(Diceros Bicornis longipes)

Fact File

Size: 3 – 3.8m long

Weight: 800 – 1400kg

Habitat: South-East Africa in semi-desert savannah, wetlands, forest and woodlands

Diet: herbivore

Reason for extinction: It was hunted by humans for its horns.

Last seen: In 1930, the species became protected but was last seen in 2006 in Cameroon and pronounced officially extinct in 2011.

Interesting fact: Its two horns were 55 – 130cm and 2 – 55cm long and were thought to have medicinal powers.



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Diplodocus

(Diplodocus Longus/Carneqii/Hallorum)

Fact File

Size: Up to 27m long

Weight: 12 tonnes or more

Habitat: It lived on the plains and in the sparse woodland on the edge of forests in North America. The climate was semi-arid with a wet season.

Diet: herbivore

Reason for extinction: Scientists are yet to find out... what do you predict?

Last seen: 152 million years ago (before the mass extinction of 66 million years ago)

Interesting fact: It had two rows of teeth at the front of its mouth.



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Great Auk

(*Pinguinus Impennis*)

Fact File

Size: 75 – 85cm tall

Weight: around 5kg

Habitat: North Atlantic Islands

Diet: fish and crustaceans

Reason for extinction: It was hunted for food and its feathers.

Last seen: 1844

Interesting fact: It looked like a penguin and could not fly.



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Sabre-Toothed Cat

(Smilodon)

Fact File

Size: around 1.5m long

Weight: around 200kg

Habitat: It lived in the grasslands of North and South America.

Diet: animals that were herbivores like sloths, mammoths and mastodons

Reason for extinction: It is thought to be a mix of climate change and human colonisation.

Last seen: 10 000 years ago

Interesting fact: Its huge front teeth were up to 20cm long.



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Can We Stop Extinction?



Think about it

What do you think Theodore Roosevelt meant by this? Do you think something said in the early 1900s is still relevant today?



Choose one extinct animal and create a Fact File about them. You can look back at the information to help you.



Extinct Animals
Fact File

Use the internet and non-fiction books to research an extinct animal. Complete the table below once you have found all the information.

Animal:	Approximate date of Extinction:
What it looked like:	
Height:	Weight:
Diet:	Habitat:
Reason for Extinction:	

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