

8 EXTINCT ANIMALS

Meet some very special species whose existence came to a tragic end...

Wondering why no dinos are on these pages? All the animals on our list are 'recently extinct', which means they've died out since the 1500s.

1 DODO Mauritius (1680s)*

All that remains today of the **dodo** are a few bones and partial skeletons – so it's no wonder we have the expression 'dead as a dodo'! But these **chubby, flightless** birds were once alive and well in the forests of **Mauritius** (see page 18). Their tragic tale began in the **16th century**, when **Dutch sailors** arrived on the island and hunted this brilliant bird. The main cause of the dodo's extinction, however, was the **animals** the sailors brought with them, such as **cats, pigs and rats** – they guzzled on **dodo eggs** and out-competed the birds for food, wiping them out by the 1680s.

DID YOU KNOW...?

The name dodo may have come from the word 'dodaer', an old Dutch word meaning 'fat bum'!

D'OH!
I'VE
HAD IT!



2 GREAT AUK Rocky islands off the North Atlantic coast (1844)

The black-and-white **great auk** was once found around the **North Atlantic**, waddling around on craggy coasts – including in the UK – or swimming in the waves using its short wings. But during the early **19th century**, the great auk was killed in huge numbers for its **feathers, meat and oils**, and because people believed it had **supernatural powers**. **Unafraid of humans**, the **flightless, defenceless** birds were very easy to catch. Sailors would simply round them up and **walk them onto ships**, before bashing them on the head. Not an *auk*-some ending.

ER, THIS IS
AUK-WARD!



4 STELLER'S SEA COW Bering Sea, north Pacific Ocean (1768)

German naturalist **Georg W. Steller** first studied and described this amazing animal in 1741, in the north Pacific Ocean. Related to today's **manatees and dugongs**, **Steller's sea cows** were huge marine mammals that grew up to **10m long** – that's **twice** the length of a large family car! Living in peaceful herds, they grazed on **sea grass, kelp and algae**. Sadly, sailors and seal hunters soon realised the animal's **fatty meat** provided a hefty food supply for their voyages and they began to hunt them, big time. The result? The Steller's sea cow became extinct **just 27 years after being discovered**.

*The year of extinction

3 THYLACINE Tasmania, mainland Australia and New Guinea (1936)

Also known as the **Tasmanian tiger**, the **thylacine** was once the world's **largest meat-eating marsupial**. It looked a bit like a **wolf**, but had yellow-brown fur, **stripes** on its back and a thick, long tail. Its scientific name *Thylacinus cynocephalus* is Greek for 'dog-headed pouched one'. Although populations suffered **disease and habitat loss**, it's believed **humans** were to blame for the thylacine's ultimate extinction. Since the fierce predators liked to feast on sheep and other livestock, European settlers were quick to kill them – in fact, the Tasmanian government even **paid** people to do so! The last known thylacine died in 1936, in Hobart Zoo, Australia.

IT'S
NOT ME,
HONEST!



WHO'S THAT
HITCHING A
RIDE?

