

NEWS LESSON

Can a Pigeon Become a Dodo?

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Which extinct animal would you most like to see alive?
2. Would you visit a place to see an animal created by scientists?
3. What makes an animal worth protecting?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**extinction**	☐	A	tiny parts inside a living thing that decide how it looks and grows
2	**symbol**	☐	B	a member of the same family or group
3	**genes**	☐	C	the hard part of a bird's mouth
4	**beak**	☐	D	something that stands for a bigger idea
5	**relative**	☐	E	to stay alive
6	**species**	☐	F	one kind of animal or plant
7	**conservation**	☐	G	when a type of animal or plant dies and none are left
8	**survive**	☐	H	work to protect nature and wild animals

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Scientists want to bring back the dodo, a bird that disappeared in the 1600s. Is that possible, and is it a good idea?

1 The dodo was a large bird that could not fly. It lived on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean until it died out in the seventeenth century. Today, the bird is famous as a symbol of extinction. But scientists at an American biotechnology company are trying to do something extraordinary: create a living bird with some of the dodo's characteristics.

2 The company, Colossal Biosciences, uses genetic technology to study animals that no longer exist. Genes are the instructions inside a living thing that help control how it grows and develops. In October 2026, the company announced progress in its dodo project. It said it had rebuilt most of the dodo's genetic information and developed tools to find the genes linked to features such as the shape of its head and beak. It hopes to make careful changes to a living relative of the dodo.

3 That living relative is the Nicobar pigeon. It is a colourful bird found on islands in Asia, and scientists believe it is the dodo's closest living relative. The basic idea is to study the genetic differences between the birds and change some of the pigeon's genes.

4 However, this is not like bringing an original dodo back from the dead. The scientists have not produced a living dodo, and nobody can simply copy one from an old bone. Even if the project succeeds, the result may be a new bird that resembles a dodo in some ways, rather than exactly the same species that disappeared centuries ago.

5 Some conservation experts think the research could lead to useful new ways of protecting endangered animals. Others believe that the money would be better spent saving species that are still alive. They also ask where a new dodo-like bird would live. The original birds disappeared after people arrived on Mauritius and introduced animals that disturbed their habitat. Any future bird would need a safe place to survive.

6 For now, the dodo remains extinct. Colossal's announcement is about progress in genetic research, not a successful return. But the project raises an interesting question. If humans helped cause an animal's disappearance, should we try to bring it back, or should we focus on preventing the next extinction? The answer could shape how conservation works for many years to come.

Sources: Reuters. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Some experts would prefer to spend the money on animals that still exist. T F NG
2. Scientists have produced a living dodo. T F NG
3. Scientists believe the Nicobar pigeon is a distant relative of the dodo. T F NG
4. The dodo came from an island in the Indian Ocean. T F NG
5. The company plans to set the first new bird free on Mauritius next year. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

characteristics	disturbed	extraordinary	habitat	introduced	predator	resembles

1. Cutting down forests destroys the _____ where many animals live.
2. Bringing back a lost animal would be an _____ achievement.
3. Dogs and wolves share several _____ , such as sharp teeth and a good sense of smell.
4. Rats _____ to the island by ships ate the birds' eggs.
5. A mule _____ a horse, but it is a different animal.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. In October 2026, the company _____ progress in its dodo project. (ANNOUNCE)
2. It said it _____ most of the dodo's genetic information. (REBUILD)
3. People _____ rats and pigs to Mauritius, and the animals harmed the birds. (BRING)
4. The original birds _____ after people arrived on Mauritius. (DISAPPEAR)
5. Any future bird _____ a safe place to survive. (NEED)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A collocation is a pair of words that go together naturally. We say make progress, not do progress.

do	give	made	play	pose	raises	take

1. The team has _____ good progress with its genetic research.
2. The project _____ an interesting question about how we protect animals.
3. Governments must _____ action to protect rare animals.
4. Rats and cats _____ a serious threat to island birds.
5. Safe habitats _____ an important role in protecting wildlife.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Would a bird that looked like a dodo count as bringing it back?
2. Would you spend more on protecting living species or recreating extinct ones?
3. Could the promise of bringing animals back make extinction seem less serious?

9 Role-play: where should the money go?

Work in pairs. Your wildlife charity has £50,000 to spend. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the colleague who wants to protect living birds

You want to spend the money on a nature reserve for birds in danger today. Explain why. Ask your partner what they would really get for the money.

Student B · the colleague who likes the new science

You want to give the money to research that tries to bring back a lost animal. Say why it could help. Listen to your partner's worries and try to agree a plan.

Useful phrases

I'd rather spend it on animals we can still save.
That's a fair point, but it's worth the risk.
What would we actually get for the money?
I don't think it's one or the other.
Could we split it between the two projects?
We're running out of time, so let's decide.

Afterwards, tell the class: where did the money go, and who gave way?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 D · 3 A · 4 C · 5 B · 6 F · 7 H · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 F · 4 T · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 habitat · 2 extraordinary · 3 characteristics · 4 introduced · 5 resembles

6 Verb forms

1 announced · 2 had rebuilt · 3 brought · 4 disappeared · 5 would need or will need or needs

7 Language focus

1 made · 2 raises · 3 take · 4 pose · 5 play

This lesson is free. If it saved you time, you can support johnplusnews at **ko-fi.com/johnplusenglish**