

# These are the last individuals of a species now extinct in the world.

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Every extinct species once had a last individual. While countless individuals disappeared before humans had a chance to document their species, others have become recognized around the world. **Here are some of the most famous animals that signaled the end of their era.**

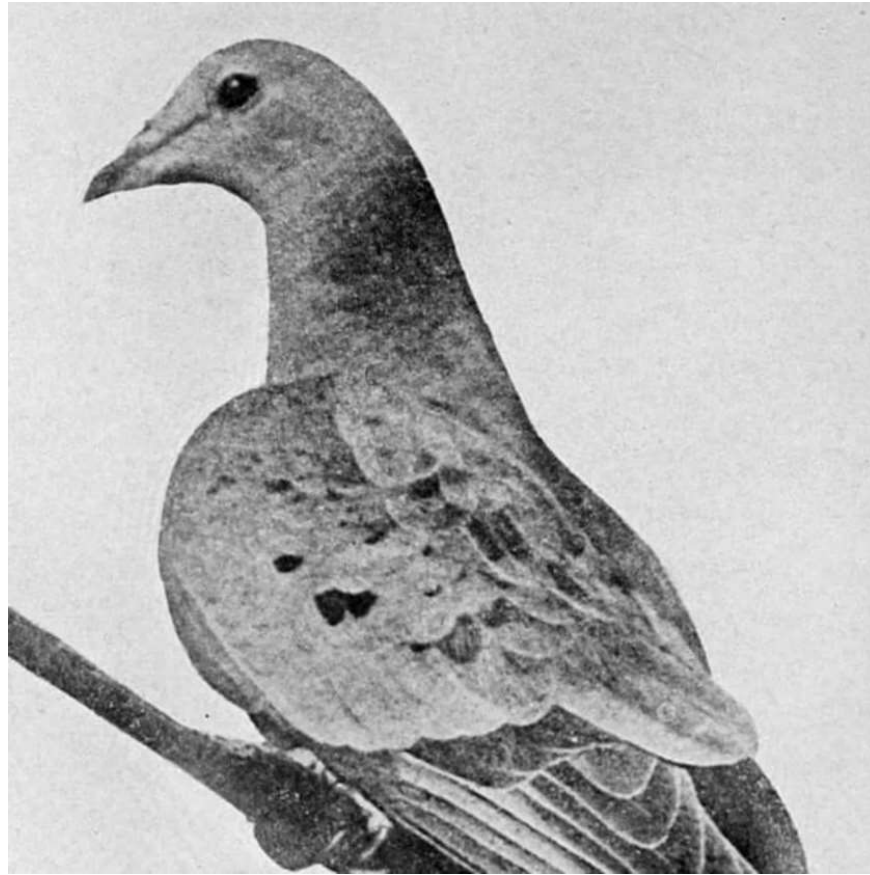
## **Booming Ben the Hen - Heath's Last Chicken**



The extinction of the prairie pheasant—a subspecies of the greater prairie chicken—came at the end of a period when conservation efforts were struggling, making their story even more tragic. After their habitat was altered by colonists, prairie pheasants had nearly disappeared from the northeastern United States, and by 1870, the last ones were living on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts.

But conservationists weren't about to let the species die so easily. A reserve was established for the population, and by 1916, their numbers had grown from 100 to 2,000. Unfortunately, all that progress was wiped out in May of that year when a bushfire burned through their habitat, killing hundreds of birds. Despite repopulation efforts, by 1929 only one Prairie Pheasant remained: a male named Booming Ben. He had last been spotted in 1932.

### **Passenger Pigeon Martha**



Long before Martha, passenger pigeons were the most common birds in North America, flying in flocks of hundreds of millions and blocking out the sun for hours at a time. But by the early 20th century, their population had dwindled from an estimated 6 billion to just a handful in captivity. Deforestation and hunting contributed to the dramatic decline in numbers. Martha was born at the Cincinnati Zoo and lived there for 29 years before her death in 1914, marking the end of the passenger pigeon. After her death, she was immediately put on ice and shipped to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, where her stuffed body remains on display to this day.

## **Pyrenean ibex - Celia**



Celia's Pyrenean ibex status remains a matter of debate. Her body was found in Spain in 2000, leading biologists to declare the species extinct after years of hunting pressure and competition from domestic cattle. But that's not the end of the story: Using skin samples collected shortly after her death, scientists successfully cloned Celia in 2003, marking the first time a species had been 'resurrected' from extinction. The cloned ibex died just minutes after birth due to a lung defect, so sadly, the attempt to revive the Pyrenean ibex was unsuccessful.

### **Rabbs's Toughie Tree Frog**



Toughie was not only the last of the Rabbs' fringe-legged treefrogs—but also the first of its kind ever discovered. Researchers found it in Panama in 2005 during an effort to rescue wild amphibians from a deadly skin fungus spreading through the forest. It was given a new home at the Atlanta Botanical Garden and named Toughie. Eventually, many frogs like Toughie were found, and the newly discovered species *Ecnomiohyla rabborum* was officially recognized in 2008. However, the frog went extinct in the wild and in captivity a few years later, and when Toughie died in 2016, the species was probably gone too.

## Pinta Island Tortoise - George the Lonesome Tortoise



Few tortoises have held onto their position as long as Lonesome George. The Pinta Island tortoise was first spotted on its namesake island in the Galápagos in 1971. Initially, the discovery sparked renewed hope for its fate: Before George, the species was believed to have been driven to extinction by whalers and fur traders who visited the island. Conservationists attempted to find a surviving Pinta female tortoise to mate with, and when that failed, they placed her in a cage with closely related females. These breeding attempts were unsuccessful, however, and in 2012 Lonesome George died in captivity on Santa Cruz Island, California, without producing any offspring. It is estimated that she was over 100 years old at the time of her death.

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