

Fit to be cloned: Making case for reintroducing extinct species

De-extinction raises a host of questions: ethical, practical, philosophical. But for advocates, there's a rhetorical question as well: How do you persuade a lay audience to support the project? That persuasion involves special challenges: one has to explain and normalize a complex technology, answer ethical objections, and make a radically new approach to nature seem emotionally "right."

De-extinction has been much discussed in print, but the most complete case for the project is made at the website of Revive and Restore, a nonprofit dedicated to "genomic conservation"; their "overall goal," in their words, is "enhancing biological diversity and ecological health worldwide." Revive and Restore—the project of environmentalist, entrepreneur and Whole Earth Catalog founder Stewart Brand, and his wife, Ryan Phelan—touts, sponsors, and helps to coordinate several hoped-for restorations, including the heath hen, the passenger pigeon, and the woolly mammoth. In TED talks and other forums, Brand has been a passionate advocate of de-extinction.

Revive and Restore's webpages are artful and complex: words, images, and video combine and reinforce each other, and appeals to reason and emotion are interwoven. The total effect of these strategies is to present de-extinction as an ideal route to an ideal outcome; in doing so, however, the persuasion tends to erase or minimize complexities, both technical and conceptual. To see how this works, let's take a closer look, beginning with the smallest unit: the word chosen to describe the project.

Read full, original article: [Of Clocks and Mammoths: The Pitch for De-Extinction](#)