De-extinction company plans to recreate giant moa bird

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It may only be a matter of time before dinosaurs are back among us. Biotechnology and genetic engineering company Colossal Biosciences claims it is on the cusp of successfully bringing back extinct species. On Tuesday, the company announced its plan to resurrect the moa – a 3.6-metre-tall, flightless bird. The giant moa once roamed New Zealand's South Island. It was hunted to extinction 600 years ago. Colossal's chief scientist Beth Shapiro said: "We're bringing back avian dinosaurs." Her colleagues will try to recreate the extinct bird by extracting DNA from the bones of long-deceased moa. Scientists will use this DNA to modify the genome of an emu, which is the closest living relative of the moa.

Colossal is embarking on many "de-extinction" projects. These have created controversy among the scientific community. Colossal defines de-extinction as: "The process of generating an organism that both resembles and is genetically similar to an extinct species." It claims de-extinction will allow scientists to engineer natural resistances in endangered animals today. It would also enhance the adaptability of species to "thrive" amid climate change, dwindling resources, disease and human interference. However, critics contend that extinct animals cannot be replicated. Many scientists are concerned about the unforeseen and detrimental impacts of inserting "hybrid" species into the wild.

Sources: livescience.com / *cnn.com* / *colossal.com*

Writing

Humans should not try to change nature by using de-extinction. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

time / dinosaurs / biotechnology / genetic engineering / extinct / moa / hunted / DNA / de-extinction / controversy / community / endangered / disease / hybrid / the wild

True / False

1) The company Colossal specializes in geoscience and neuroscience. T / F
2) Colossal has recreated two moa chicks. T / F
3) Colossal's chief scientist said she wants to bring back dinosaur birds. T / F
4) The ostrich is the closest living relative to the moa. T / F
5) There is broad approval of de-extinction in the scientific community. T / F
6) Colossal said de-extinction would help species survive climate change. T / F
7) Many scientists say extinct animals cannot be recreated. T / F
8) Scientists are not worried about putting de-extinct animals into the wild. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	**company**	a.	taking
2.	**on the cusp of**	b.	resurrecting
3.	**bringing back**	c.	wandered
4.	**plan**	d.	alter
5.	**giant**	e.	firm
6.	**roamed**	f.	intention
7.	**colleagues**	g.	dead
8.	**extracting**	h.	about to
9.	**deceased**	i.	co-workers
10.	**modify**	j.	huge

Discussion – Student A

a) What do you think about what you read?
b) What do you think there is controversy about de-extinction?
c) How might de-extinction help endangered species?
d) How might de-extinction help animals thrive in climate change?
e) What might de-extinct animals look like if they are hybrids?
f) What three adjectives best describe this story?
g) What might the detrimental impacts be on the wild?
h) What questions would you like to ask the scientists?

Phrase Match

1.	It may only be a matter	a.	extinction 600 years ago
2.	The giant moa once roamed	b.	scientific community
3.	It was hunted to	c.	relative of the moa
4.	Scientists will use this DNA	d.	be replicated
5.	the closest living	e.	to modify the genome
6.	controversy among the	f.	into the wild
7.	genetically	g.	amid climate change
8.	species to "thrive"	h.	of time
9.	extinct animals cannot	i.	similar
10.	inserting "hybrid" species	j.	New Zealand

Discussion – Student B

a) What do you think of bringing extinct animals back to life?

b) What do you know about the dinosaurs?

c) What do you think of genetic engineering?

d) What do you know about the moa?

e) What are the dangers of bringing extinct animals back to life?

f) What extinct animals would you like to become de-extinct?

g) Would you like to see dinosaurs roam Earth again?

h) Should scientists not play with nature?

Spelling

1. a matter of time before dsrsniaou are back
2. eegtnic engineering
3. bringing back extinct espceis
4. DNA from the bones of long- sedcadee moa
5. use this DNA to modify the nmeoge of an emu
6. the closest living eeiatlvr of the moa
7. These have created tseyrnovcor
8. generating an miansgor
9. engineer natural iasrsestenc
10. hrviet amid climate change
11. winlnddgi resources
12. titanemlder impacts

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. b	4. f	5. j
6. c	7. i	8. a	9. g	10. d

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What is it only a matter of time that we might see the return of?
2.	How tall is the moa?
3.	How long ago did the moa disappear?
4.	What did a chief scientist say her company was bringing back?
5.	Which bird is the closest living relative of the moa?
6.	What has the company created among the scientific community?
7.	What did the company say could benefit from new natural resistances?
8.	What would de-extinction enhance the adaptability of species to do?
9.	What did critics say could not happen to extinct species?
10.	Where might "hybrid" species be released?

Speaking – De-extinction

Rank these with your partner. Put the most detrimental effects of de-extinction at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Ecosystem disruption
- Genetic unpredictability
- Biodiversity distortion
- Unanticipated evolution
- Invasive behavior
- Disease vulnerability
- Ethical concerns
- Resource strain

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	T	4	F	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	F

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.

