

Deborah Kerbel  
*Illustrated by*  
Aimée van Drimmelen

# The Late, Great Endlings

STORIES OF THE  
LAST SURVIVORS



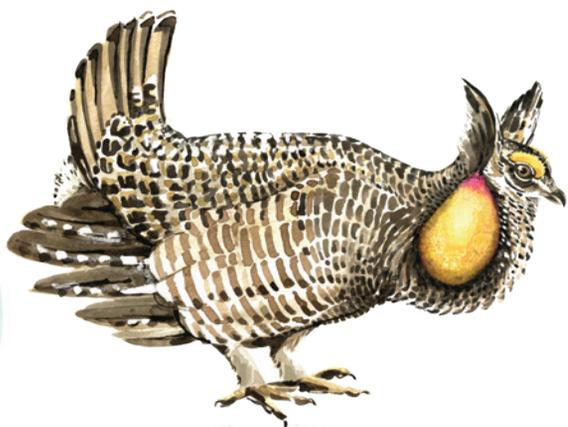
Something that you may not know:  
in each and every case  
of a disappearing species,  
extinction had a face.



**THE ENDLINGS: THE LAST KNOWN SURVIVORS OF A SPECIES.** Over the past 500 years, thousands of species of plants and animals have become extinct. *The Late, Great Endlings* pays homage to some of the more well-known endlings of the past century with rhyming stanzas and watercolor illustrations that accompany factual descriptions of each animal and the circumstances that lead to their species' extinction. Together, these portraits of animals, like the passenger pigeon, the Pinta Island tortoise and the Tasmanian tiger, are a poignant symbol of a world irreversibly altered by human development, habitat loss and climate change. Readers are invited to reflect on the interconnectedness of all life forms on our planet and take an additional look at animals that are at risk of becoming extinct in our lifetime. Concluding on a hopeful note, the final page offers suggestions for what kids can do to change the course of this mass species extinction crisis.

**Deborah Kerbel** is the critically acclaimed, award-winning author of several books for young people of all ages, including *Before You Were Born*, *Fred and Marjorie*, *Slow Moe*, *Swish Slosh* and *Grumble Yawn*. Her books have been shortlisted for the Governor General's Literary Award, the Canadian Library Association's YA Book Award and the Forest of Reading Blue Spruce Award, among others. Deborah was born in London, England, and raised in Toronto, where she now lives with her family.

**Aimée van Drimmelen** is an artist, designer and musician based on the traditional territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən-speaking Peoples (Victoria, British Columbia). Her illustrations have been featured in a variety of publications, including *The Walrus*, *Reader's Digest* and *POETRY* magazine, and she was the artist in residence at the Royal BC Museum for two years. Drawing inspiration from the natural world and ecosystems, Aimée collects plant materials from around her region to make inks.



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# The Late, Great Endlings: Stories of the Last Survivors

Author: Deborah Kerbel

Illustrator: Aimée van Drimmelen

October 18, 2022

This STEM-based, illustrated nonfiction picture book introduces readers to several well-known animal and insect endlings, the last known survivors of a species, while discussing the mass extinction crisis facing our planet and what kids can do to make a difference.

<b>Format:</b>	<b>Hardcover</b>	<b>PDF</b>	<b>EPUB</b>
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## KEY SELLING POINTS

- A beautifully illustrated book for introducing children to the concepts of endangered and extinct animals.
- Ideal for both story time and classroom learning; certain to prompt further discussion about habitat loss and climate activism.
- Profiles eight extinct species of mammals, birds, amphibians, insects and marsupials. Some of these species only exist as grainy photos or deteriorating taxidermied specimens, so this book brought them back to life through stunning paintings.
- Refers to the many species that could be extinct by 2050, such as polar bears, chimpanzees, lowland gorillas, monarch butterflies and koala bears.
- Scientists believe we're currently at the start of a sixth mass extinction. It's estimated that 50% of all species on Earth now could face extinction by 2120.
- Includes seven suggestions for what kids can do to get involved.

## PROMOTIONAL PLANS INCLUDE

- Print and online advertising campaigns
- Promotion at national and regional school, library and trade conferences
- Extensive ARC distribution, including NetGalley
- Blog and social media promotion
- Outreach in Orca newsletters



PHOTO CREDIT: ADRIAN FIEBIG

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

**Deborah Kerbel** is the critically acclaimed, award-winning author of several books for young people of all ages, including *Before You Were Born*, *Fred and Marjorie*, *Slow Moe*, *Swish Slosh* and *Grumble Yawn*. Her books have been shortlisted for the Governor General's Literary Award, the Canadian Library Association's YA Book Award and the Forest of Reading Blue Spruce Award, among others. Deborah was born in London, England, and raised in Toronto, where she now lives with her family.



PHOTO CREDIT: CAROLINE DESJEUETS

**ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:**

**Aimée van Drimmelen** is an artist, designer and musician based on the traditional territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən-speaking Peoples (Victoria, British Columbia). Her illustrations have been featured in a variety of publications, including *The Walrus*, *Reader's Digest* and *POETRY* magazine, and she was the artist in residence at the Royal BC Museum for two years. Drawing inspiration from the natural world and ecosystems, Aimée collects plant materials from around her region to make inks.

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# The Late, Great Endlings

## Stories of the Last Survivors

Deborah Kerbel

*Illustrated by*

Aimée van Drimmelen

ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS

*You know about the dodo bird,  
great auk and dinosaur—  
lost creatures that once shared our world  
so many years before.*

*But something that you may not know:  
in each and every case  
of a disappearing species,  
extinction had a face.*



*Behold the late, great endlings,  
last creatures of their sort.  
Survivors of millennia  
till humans cut them short.*

*The ending is a special beast,  
though tragic, to be sure.  
For once the ending breathes its last,  
its species is no more.*

**Ending:**

the last known survivor  
of a species or subspecies

*The word was coined in the  
mid-1990s by Dr. Robert Webster,  
a physician from Jasper, Georgia.*

Over the past 500 years, thousands of species of birds, plants and animals have become extinct. Most endlings die quietly and anonymously in the wild. But in some rare cases, humans were there to witness their final days. These reluctant ambassadors were given names and have gone on to become symbols of their tragic species.



Ben



Celia



Toughie



Incas



GEORGE



Martha

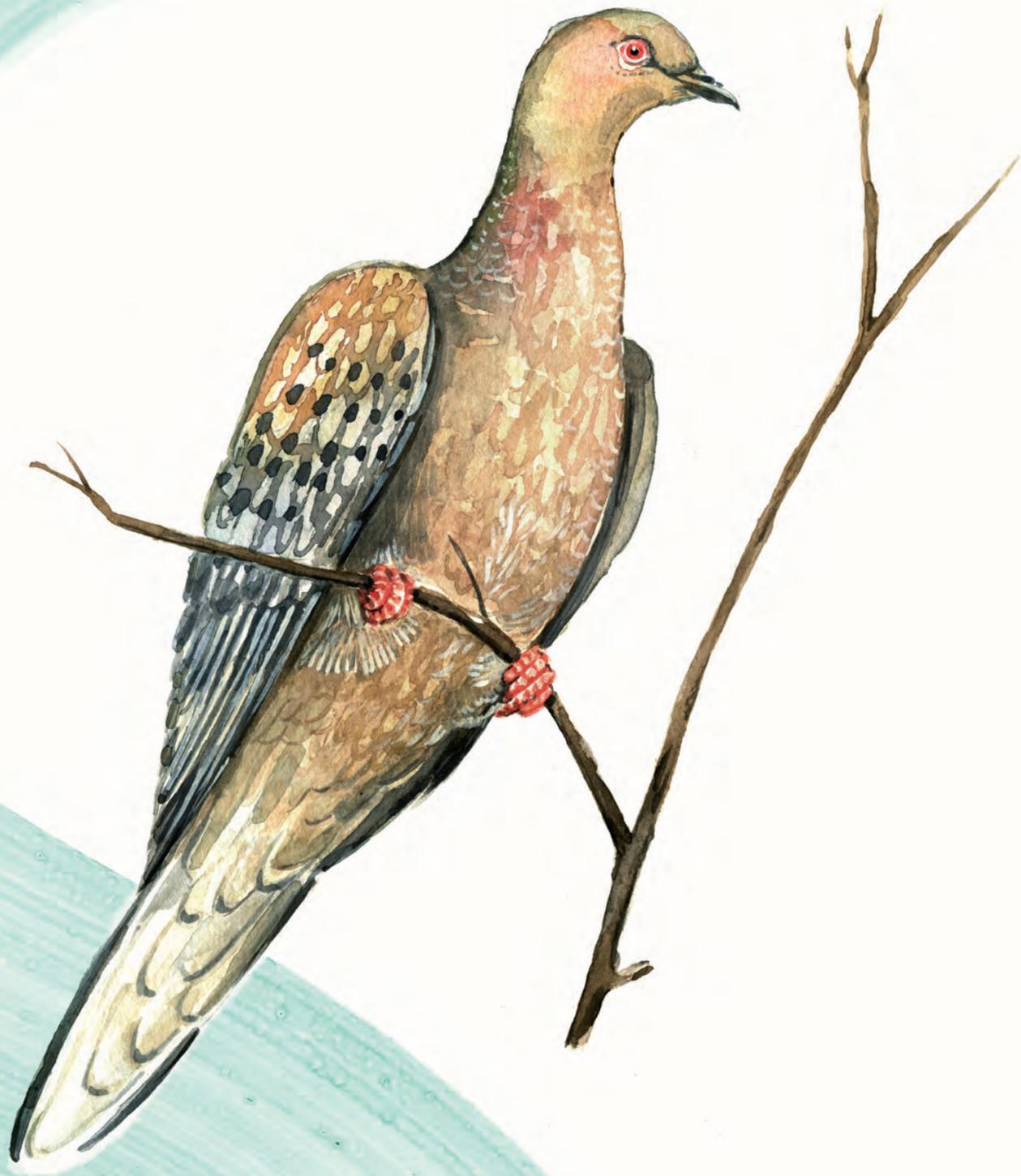


Turji



Benjamin





## Martha

*September 1, 1914*

### Last passenger pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*)

Once Martha's cousins filled the skies,  
made morning look like night.  
Then, one by one, we hunted them  
till none were left in sight.

Until the 19th century, the passenger pigeon was the most plentiful bird in North America, its population numbering in the billions. Historical accounts describe migrating flocks so massive they darkened the sky for hours as they passed overhead. Humans' overhunting quickly and drastically reduced their numbers, and by 1914 only Martha was left. She died at the Cincinnati Zoo, at age 29.

Until about 200 years ago, heath hens (a subspecies of the prairie chicken) were a common sight across the plains of the northeastern United States. Sadly, hunting and habitat loss decimated their numbers, and by 1885 the hens had completely disappeared from the mainland. A small population remained on Martha's Vineyard (an island near Cape Cod), but despite determined last-ditch efforts to save the species, the damage had already been done. By 1931 only one heath hen was left. Booming Ben lived as an ending for two years.

## Booming Ben

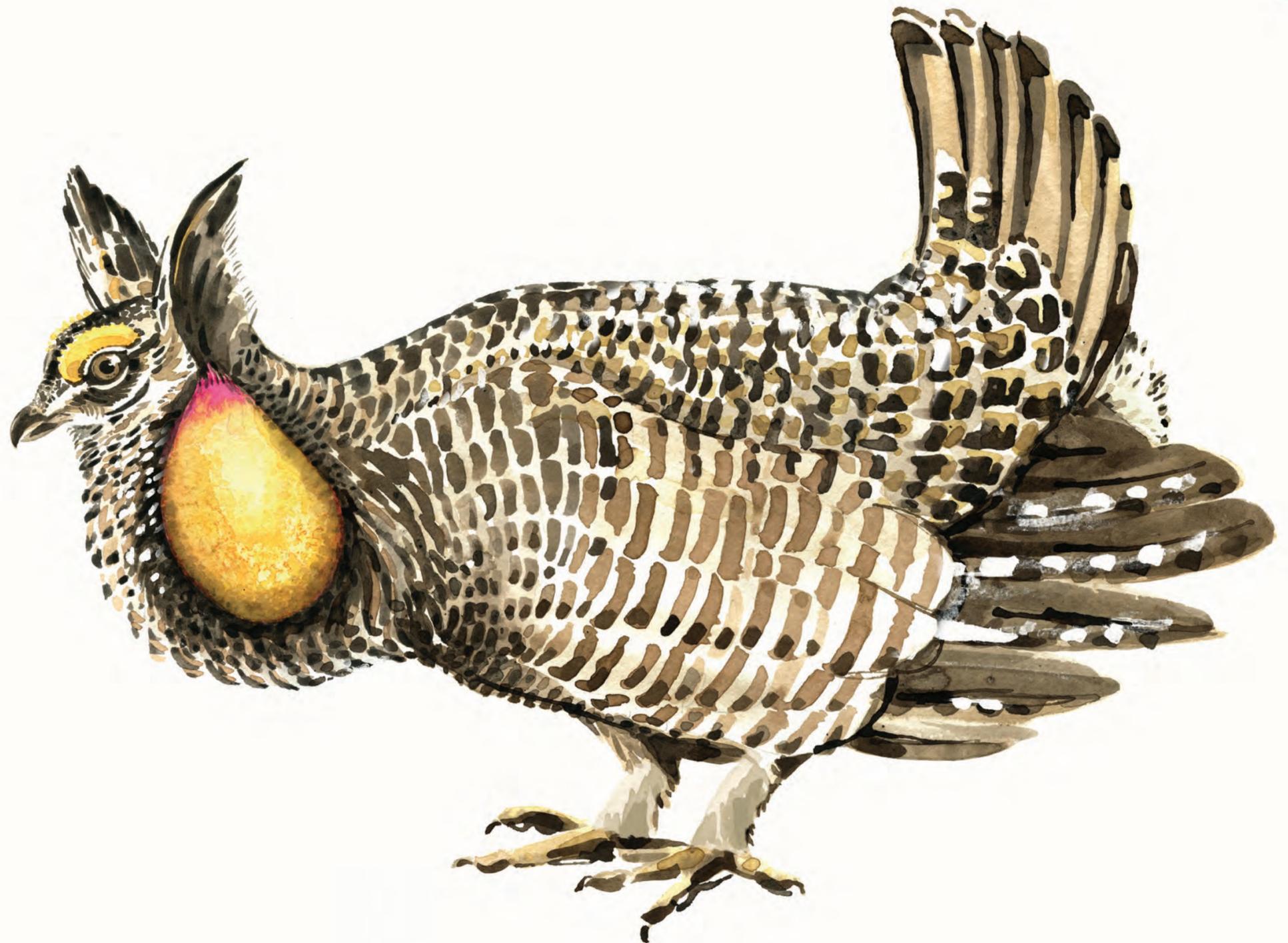
*March 11, 1932*

Last heath hen  
(*Tympanuchus cupido cupido*)

Farewell to our dear feathered friend.

We hardly knew you, Ben.

Old photographs are all that's left  
of this once-common hen.





## Lonesome George

*June 24, 2012*

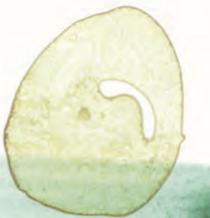
Last Pinta Island tortoise  
(*Chelonoidis abingdonii*)

Poor 100-year-old Lonesome George.

His passing we lament.

Did he wonder in those final days  
where all the others went?

The giant tortoises of Pinta Island were almost completely wiped out by hunters in the 19th century. The remaining ones died as a result of wild goats being introduced to the habitat—the goats decimated most of the island’s vegetation, which had been the tortoises’ main source of food. The subspecies was believed to be extinct until, in 1971, a single surviving male was discovered. For the next 40-plus years Lonesome George was known as one of the rarest animals on Earth. He was 100 years old when he died, which is considered quite young for a Pinta Island tortoise.





## Incas

*February 21, 1918*

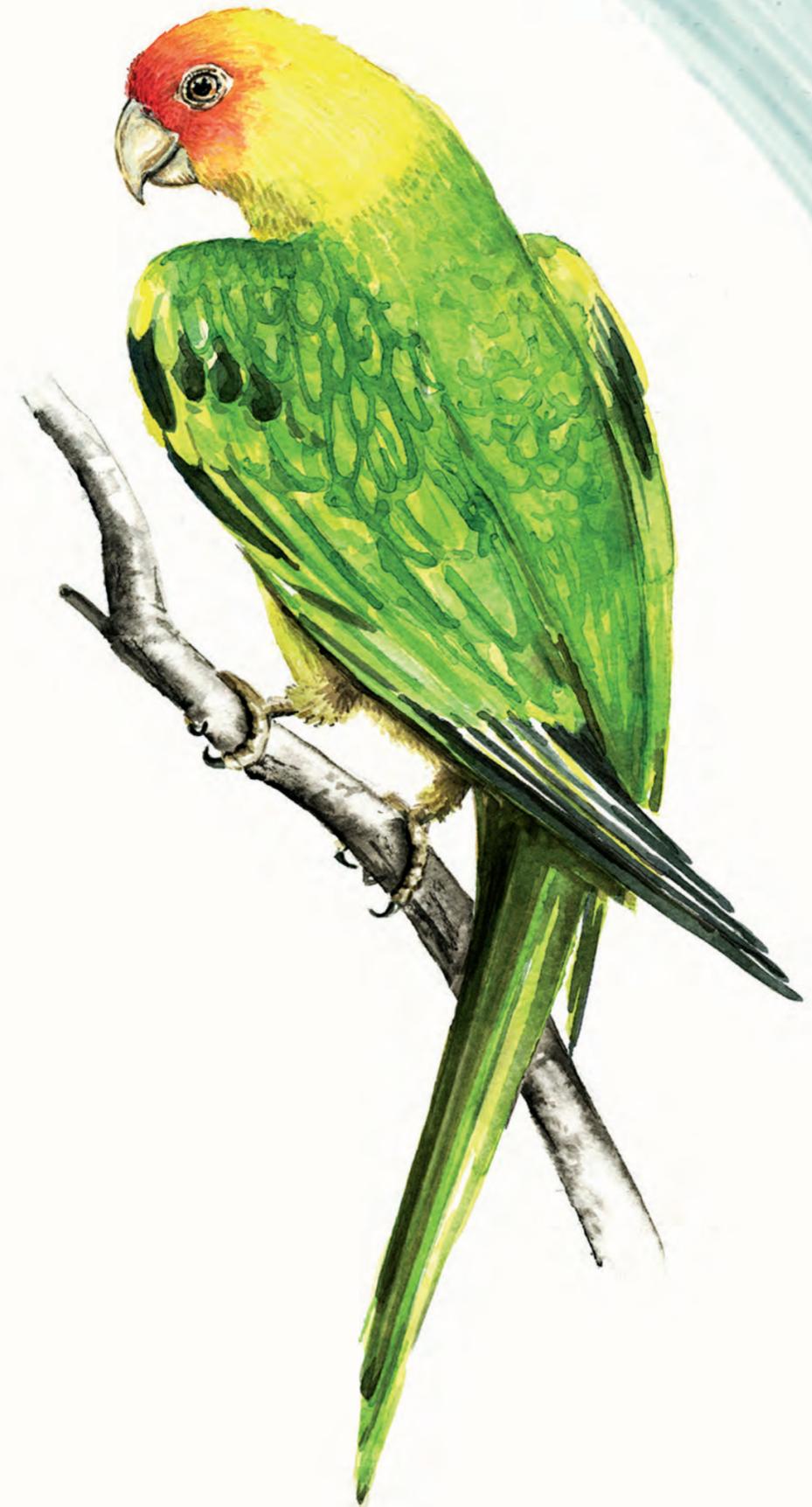
### Last Carolina parakeet (*Conuropsis carolinensis*)

Rest in peace, dear little bird.

Your memory will live on  
in cautionary tales because  
your species is now gone.



Until its extinction, the Carolina parakeet was the only parrot native to the eastern United States. Hunting (it was prized for its colorful feathers), disease and loss of habitat from deforestation all contributed to the species' demise. Incas, the last surviving male, died in captivity at the Cincinnati Zoo after losing his mate, Lady Jane. Incas died in the same cage in which Martha, the last passenger pigeon, had passed away four years earlier.

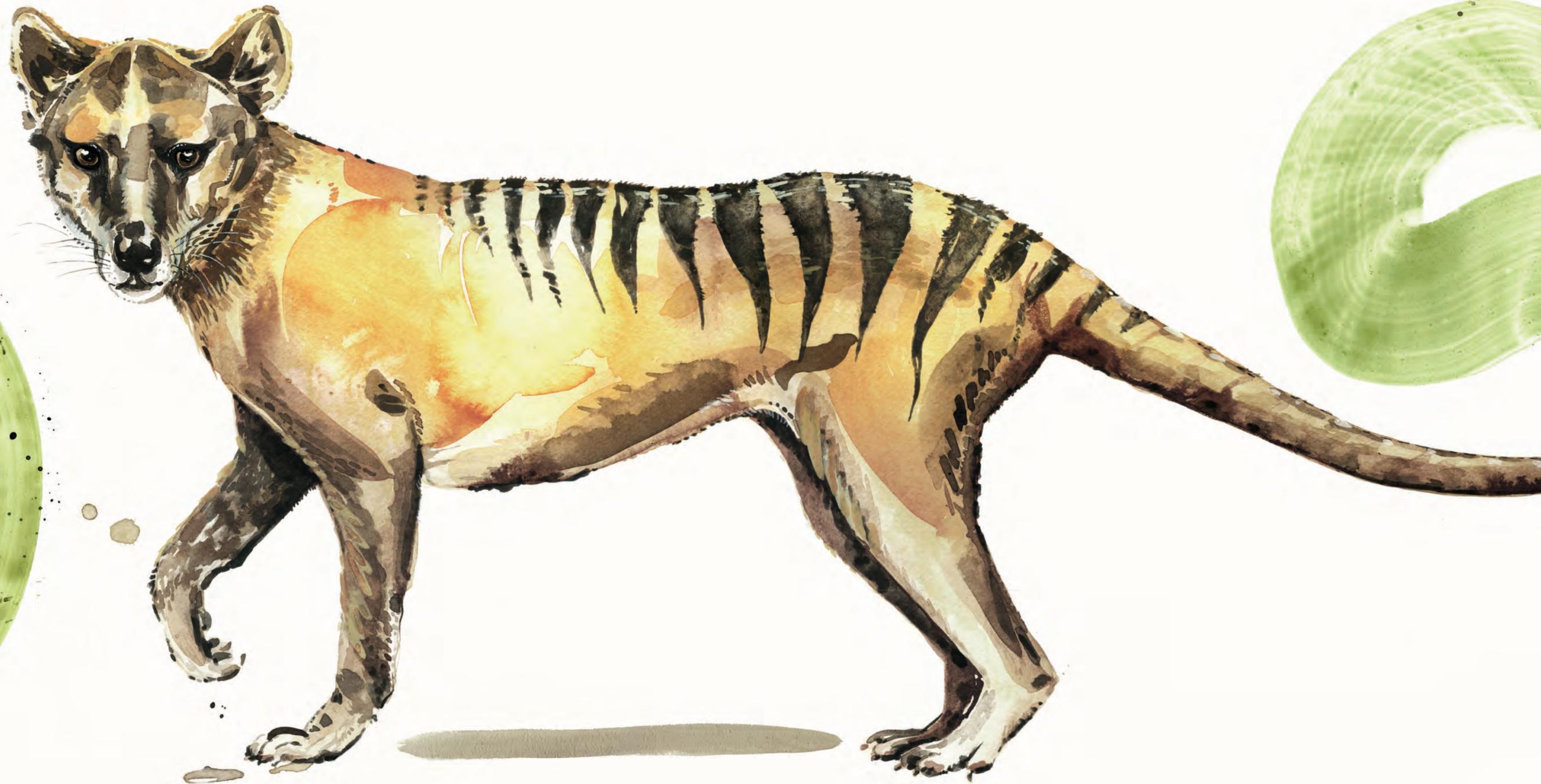


**Benjamin**  
*September 7, 1936*

Last Tasmanian tiger  
(*Thylacinus cynocephalus*)

A requiem for Benjamin,  
the last one of his kind.  
Another one as rare as him  
the world will never find.

Native to mainland Australia as well as the islands of Tasmania and New Guinea, the Tasmanian tiger (also known as the thylacine) was the world's largest carnivorous marsupial. This unique creature had the face of a coyote, the coloring and stripes of a tiger, and the belly pouch of a kangaroo. A once plentiful species, it was considered a threat to sheep and livestock by colonial settlers. As a result, the Tasmanian government offered a reward to tiger hunters for each one they killed from 1888 to 1909. Due to overhunting and loss of habitat, the world has lost this unique creature. Benjamin, the last of his kind, died of exposure at the Beaumaris Zoo after he was accidentally left out of his enclosure on a cold night.





## Celia

*January 6, 2000*

Last Pyrenean ibex  
(*Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica*)

We will remember Celia,  
dear and long departed.  
A subspecies extinction that has  
left us brokenhearted.



In 1999, scientists discovered that Celia was the only Pyrenean ibex left in the world. Rather than capturing and caging her, they collared her and allowed her to remain in the wild. When Celia was killed in an accident a year later, her cells were preserved for science. The subspecies was able to make a brief comeback in 2003 after scientists successfully cloned Celia. Unfortunately, the newborn lived for just 10 minutes. The Pyrenean ibex now holds the unique distinction of being the only animal in the world to have become extinct twice.



**Turgi**  
*January 31, 1996*

Last Polynesian tree snail  
(*Partula turgida*)

In ever-loving memory  
of Turgi the tree snail.  
His disappearance from the world  
a sad and tragic tale.



Colonists brought giant African land snails to the Polynesian Islands in the 1800s. The new species destroyed the local snail populations, most of which had been flourishing on the islands for millennia. Turgi the endingling passed away in a plastic box at the London Zoo in 1996. Because Polynesian tree snails move so slowly—a rate of less than two feet a year—it took Turgi's keepers a few days to determine that he had died. His grave marker is a tragic tribute to his fallen species. It reads: *1.5 million years BC to January 1996.*



## Toughie

September 26, 2016

### Last Rabbs' fringe-limbed tree frog (*Ecnomiohyla rabborum*)

This handsome endling rests in peace.

Oh, fine amphibian!

Sweet Toughie has now hopped away  
into oblivion.



Amphibians are the most endangered of all animal groups. Since the 1980s a global amphibian extinction crisis has been underway—it is estimated that a third or more of all amphibian species are currently at risk of disappearing. Amphibian population declines are caused by disease, habitat destruction, pollution and pesticide use, as well as the spread of a deadly fungal disease called chytridiomycosis.

Toughie died by himself at the Atlanta Botanical Garden, thousands of miles away from his birthplace in the treetops of Panama. His death has become a tragic symbol of endangered amphibians. His extinction has helped raise awareness about other frog species rapidly vanishing from our planet.





*Good reader, I now offer you  
a question most complex:  
Of these endangered species, which  
will have an ending next?*

It's possible that the following animals could become extinct by 2050: polar bears, chimpanzees, Sumatran elephants, snow leopards, tigers, lowland gorillas, orangutans, giant pandas, rhinos, sea turtles, rusty-patched bumble bees, monarch butterflies and koala bears.

It's estimated that 50 percent of all species on Earth now could face extinction by 2120.

All life forms on Earth are interconnected. If insects, plants and animals continue to disappear at a rapid rate, life for humans will be irreversibly impacted in ways we can't even begin to imagine.



**The biggest threat** to our planet's animals, insects and plants comes from habitat loss as a result of human activities such as deforestation, pesticide use, and pollution from industry and agriculture. With ever-shrinking habitats (places to live), thousands of species will eventually die out.

Trying to save our planet's endangered species is a huge job, but there's a lot you can do to make a difference.



*“Whatever happens to this single animal, let him always remind us that the fate of all living things on Earth is in human hands.”*

—Words inscribed outside Lonesome George's enclosure at the Charles Darwin Research Station on Santa Cruz Island

# HOW KIDS Can make A CHANGE

1. Become a climate activist by spreading awareness. You can do this by sharing books and information with friends and having conversations with your classmates and parents. 
2. Avoid single-use plastics like straws or cups. 
3. Reduce, reuse or recycle whenever possible. 
4. Choose to walk or ride your bike instead of driving. 
5. Read books about climate change, extinction and shrinking wildlife habitats. 
6. Pass this book along to a friend, and ask them to pass it along after they've read it. 
7. Plant a tree or habitat garden at your school or in your backyard. 

**For Ben, Martha, Incas, George, Toughie, Turgi, Benjamin, Celia...  
and all of the late, great and nameless others.**

**—D.K.**

**With love to my family and friends near and far,  
and with gratitude to the first and best artist, Mother Nature.**

**—A.v.D.**

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