

## In the news

### EXAGGERATING THE RESURRECTION

The creation of a transgenic mouse expressing a gene from the extinct Tasmanian tiger was always going to be a headline grabber.

Andrew Pask and colleagues at the University of Melbourne have isolated an enhancer sequence from museum specimens of the Tasmanian tiger, which became extinct in 1936. When expressed in mice, it drove expression of *Col2a1* in the same way as the endogenous mouse sequence. The authors of the research, published in *PLoS ONE*, suggest that this type of functional test can be applied to other sequences from extinct organisms: “At a time when extinction rates are increasing at an alarming rate ... this research discovery is critical” said co-author Marilyn Renfree (*BBC News*, 20 May 2008).

However, she went to some lengths to explain that this was not the first step towards the resurrection of extinct animals. “Our study was aimed at developing methods for examining the function and evolution of genes from extinct mammals” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 2008); “This is not a Jurassic Park-type scenario, it’s a proof of principle. It’s not aimed at bringing back the Tasmanian tiger from the dead” (*Tasmanian Mercury*, 21 May 2008).

The result of these careful caveats? “A world in which extinct creatures could be coaxed back to life came a step closer yesterday” (*The Daily Mail*, 20 May 2008) and “In a breakthrough Jurassic Park-like experiment, scientists have resurrected genes from the Tasmanian tiger” (*The Guardian*, 20 May 2008). Still, the authors can console themselves with the support they received from Nick McKim of Australia’s Green Party, who, keen to see conservation remain top of the agenda, said “We would be very concerned if the community was to form a view that extinction is not forever” (*Tasmanian Mercury*, 21 May 2008).

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