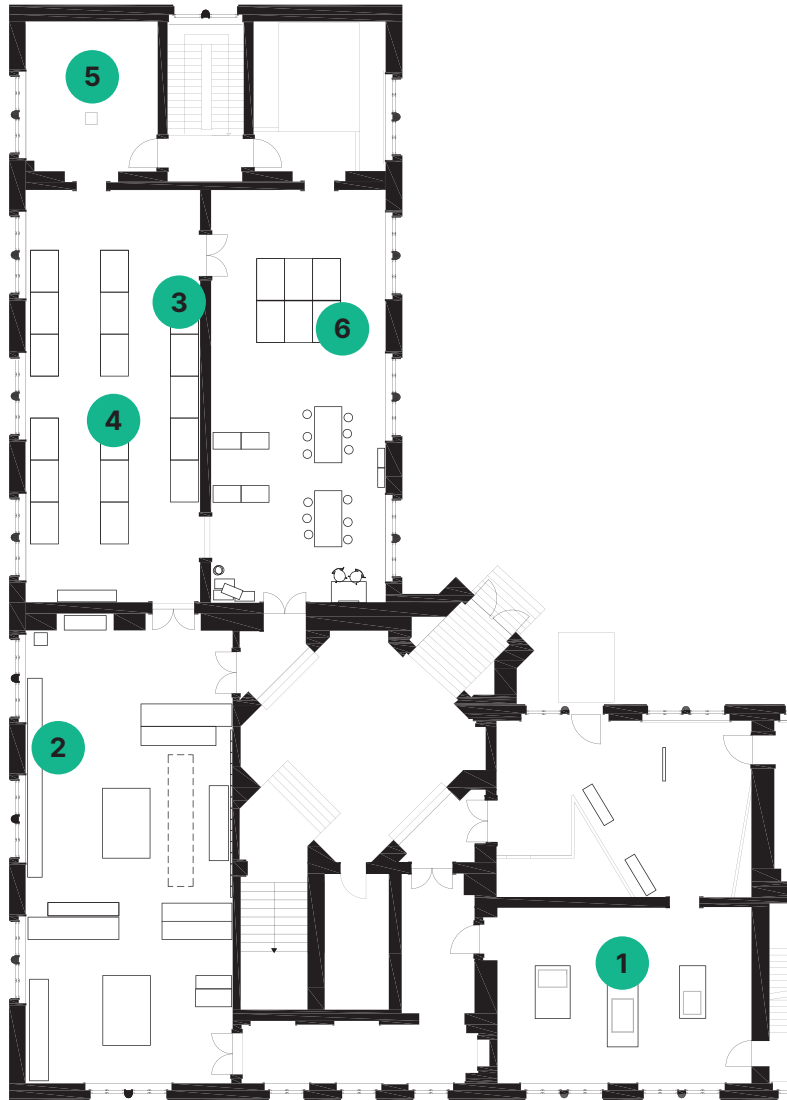


Discover the exhibition

Wild Wonderful World

# The lost nature

Today only a small amount of the species that once inhabited the Earth exist. Climate change, natural catastrophes or human impact in nature can cause species to become extinct. For the past centuries human actions have been the cause of several species still being threatened with becoming extinct.



Exhibition floor plan

DENMARK  
NATURAL HISTORY  
MUSEUM

UNIVERSITY OF  
COPENHAGEN

**1****The Great Auk**

The North Atlantic bird, the Great Auk, didn't fly, but hunted under water just like penguins. It was a sought-after prey both for its feathers and its meat. In the early 19th century, the Great Auk had become extremely rare and its eggs and plumage worth a lot of money. This was mainly due to museums and collectors' strong interest in them and willingness to pay for specimens. In 1844 the last couple of Great Auks were killed in Iceland and sold to collectors.

**2****Lord Howe Island's stick insect**

When a ship wrecked on the Lord Howe Island in 1918, the rats on board caused several of the Island's species to disappear. One of which was a large stick insect which then for several years was declared extinct. Around 80 years later, a group of scientists discovered a few of the large stick insects on a rock formation about 20 km away from the main island. Today, Australian zoos are trying to breed the stick insects so the species can be preserved and set free in nature in the future.

**3****Tasmanian thylacine**

The Tasmanian thylacine was a predator related to kangaroos and other marsupials. It was common throughout all of Australia until it was outcompeted by the wild dog species, the dingo, that humans brought to the continent around 5000 years ago. The thylacine only survived on the island of Tasmania. In the 19th century Tasmania was an English colony, and the thylacine was deliberately hunted because it threatened the breeding of sheep. This became the end of the species. In 1932 it disappeared from nature, and the last thylacine in captivity died in Hobart Zoo in 1936.

**4****Passenger pigeon**

The Passenger Pigeon used to be one of the most common birds in North America in the 19th century. Enormous flocks of millions of birds darkened the sky when they flew from forest to forest to find food. It was easy to hunt, and more birds could be hit with just a single shot against a flock. The Passenger Pigeon was especially popular as food and in shooting competitions, and its natural habitats in the larger forest became increasingly smaller because of human expansion. In a very short time, the large flocks of Passenger Pigeons disappeared, and the last Passenger Pigeon died in a zoo in 1914.

**5****Toromiro tree**

The Toromiro tree is a tree with yellow flowers, which was only found on Easter Island in the Pacific Ocean. Around 400 years ago almost all the Toromiro trees had disappeared – perhaps because of deforestation. The Norwegian adventurer Thor Heyerdahl collected seeds from one of the last remaining Toromiro trees on Easter Island in the 1960s. The seeds made it to a Swedish botanical garden where they managed to sprout. The hope is that one day the seeds can be reintroduced to Easter Island, but until then they only live in few botanical gardens in England, Denmark and France.

**6****Saber toothed cat**

The Danish scientist P.V. Lund excavated the first fossils from the prehistoric saber-toothed cat Smilodon in Brazil in the 1830s. The Smilodon was one of the largest cats to ever exist. It lived in South- and North America between 2,5 million years ago until 10.000 years ago. The Smilodon hunted large animals of prey such as giant sloths, giant armadillos, bison and camels. Around 10.000 years ago humans immigrated to America and hunted the same animals as the Smilodon. A combination of competition and climate change could be the reason the Smilodon became extinct.