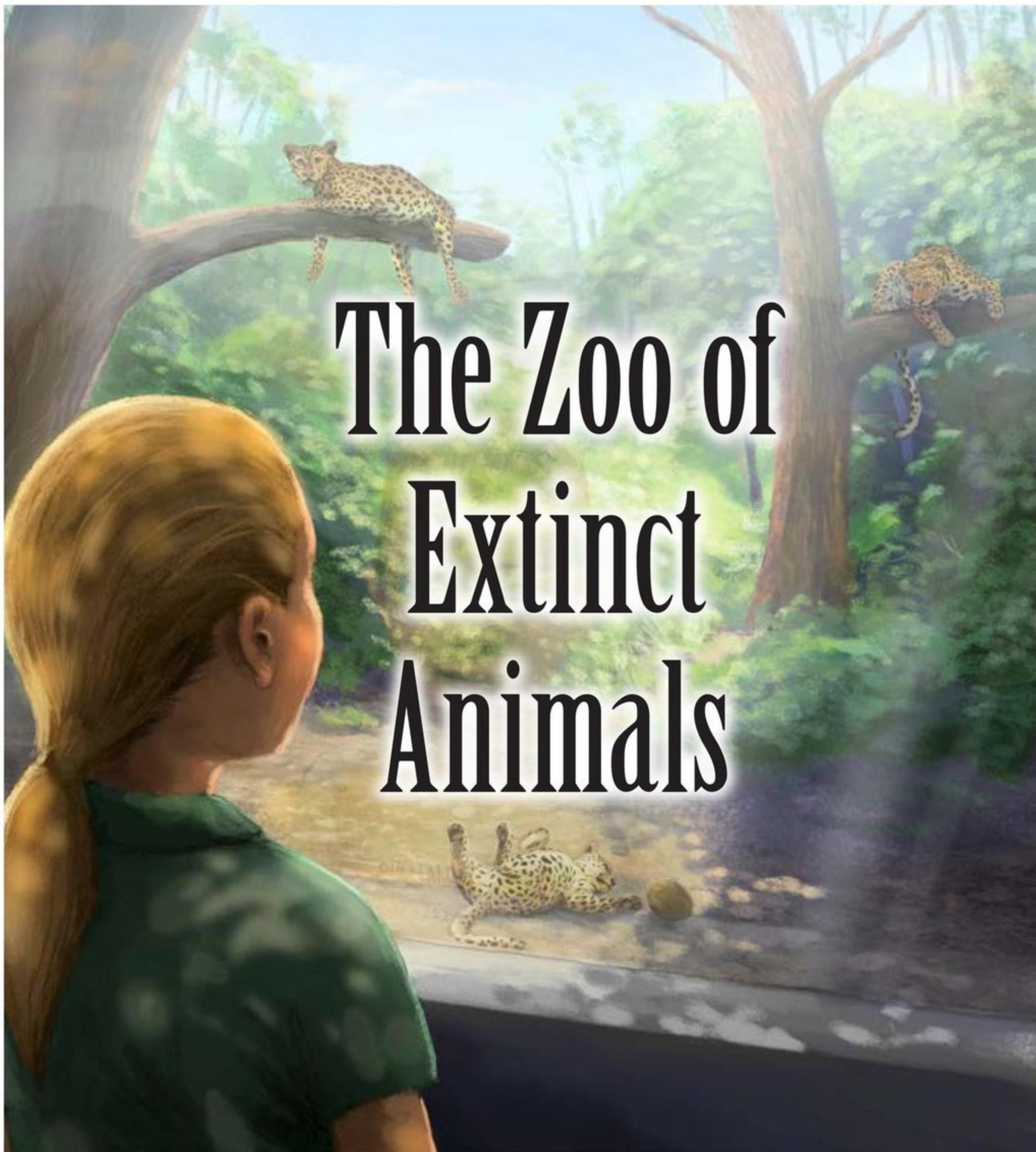


LEVELED BOOK • Z¹

The Zoo of Extinct Animals

MULTI
LEVEL
Z•Z¹•Z²

Written by Katherine Follett and Rus Buyok
Illustrated by Jeremy Norton



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www.readinga-z.com

Focus Question

How does Hazel's summer-internship experience change her?

Words to Know

captive breeding	nocturnal
compound	perpetuity
conservation	protest
conspiracy theorist	ramifications
coy	reaches
extinct	reproductive
genetic	resident
high ground	specimens
humane	speculated
internship	strained
media	transport
monitor	violating

The Zoo of Extinct Animals
Level Z1 Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL Z1	
Fountas & Pinnell	W-X
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	60

Hazel couldn't believe it—she was standing in front of a real woolly mammoth. Its tusks sliced through the air, and its trunk snaked toward Hazel's face. She yelped and stumbled back.

"Don't worry," Jim said. "Eve is just curious." Jim was the head animal keeper and Hazel's new boss.

"Eve," Hazel whispered to herself, just to be sure she wasn't dreaming.

Not two hours before, she had been in an office at the edge of the massive Wyoming **compound**, signing a ridiculous stack of papers so that her summer **internship** could begin. A man in a suit sat across from her, explaining all the legal **ramifications** of working beyond the gates she could see out his window.

"So I'm basically signing my life away?" Hazel asked, half joking, as the man took her phone.

"The Buckland Rare Animal Research Center has to protect its property," the man said. "We reserve the right to **monitor** all communications in and out of the compound, and the agreement you're signing now extends in **perpetuity**. The consequences for **violating** said agreement are . . . severe."

"I guess I'd better learn to keep a secret," Hazel said. The man forced a smile.

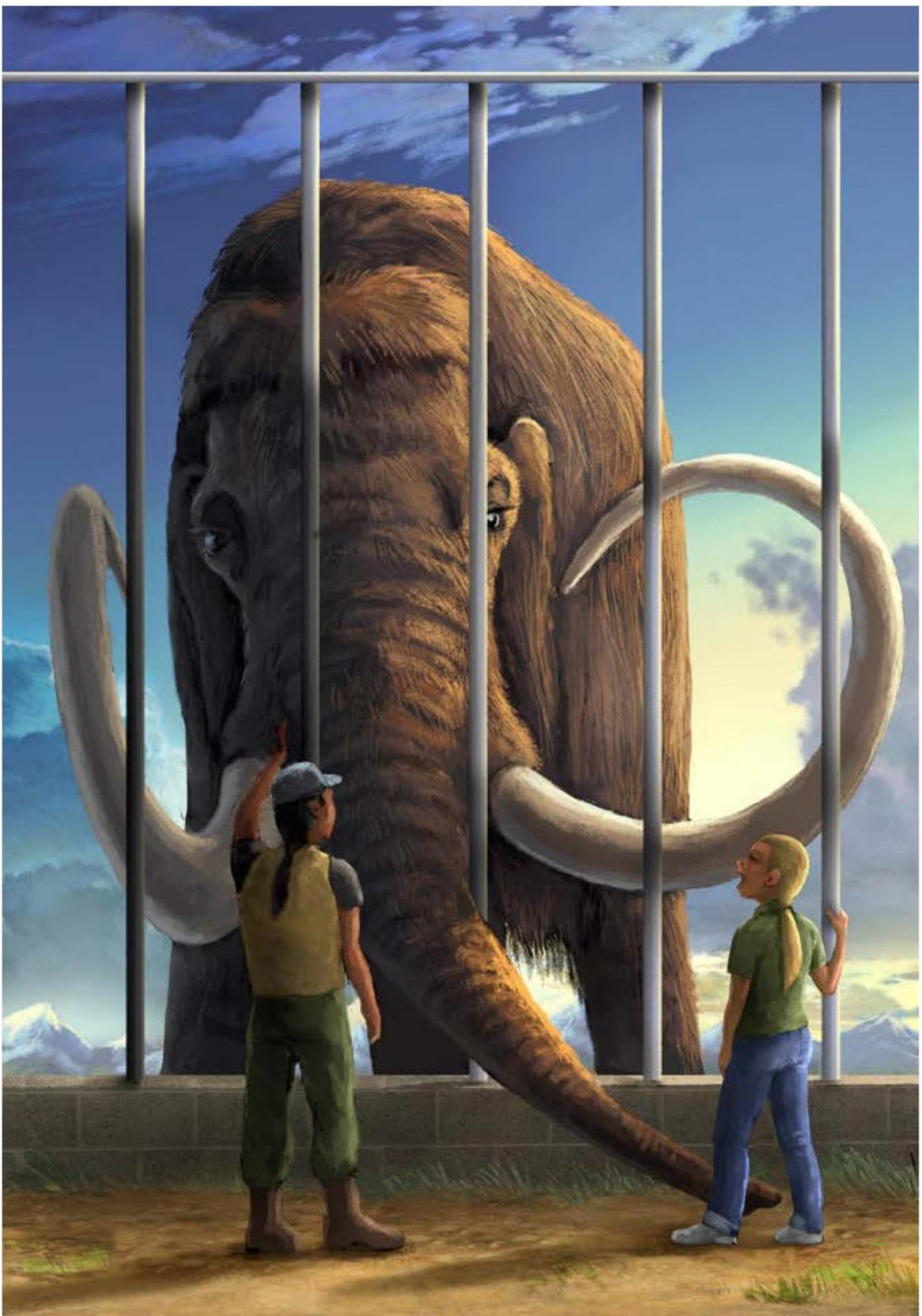
What secrets could they really have? The website made the place look like a fairly normal research zoo. True, it had the world's largest collection of endangered species, and it did say they were doing cutting-edge **genetic** and **reproductive** research. Still, all this legal mumbo jumbo had seemed a bit much.

Now, standing before Eve as the mammoth's trunk roamed over her sneakers, Hazel thought she understood.

Jim reached through the bars and scratched the huge creature on the cheek. It rumbled like a giant cat. Eve's fur was longer and thicker than Hazel would ever have imagined, forming a fluttering skirt below her belly. It smelled healthy and good, like a dog that's been jumping in leaves.

"How did you. . .? Where did she. . .?"

"Siberia, I think," Jim said. "Her genes came from there, at least. It took many years and more money than you or I could ever dream of, but Dr. Z and her team finally found a way to bring the species back—at least a couple **specimens**. The male is out having a checkup. I'm sure you can guess his name."



“She’s beautiful,” Hazel whispered.

Jim smiled. “She’s just the first stop.”

Hazel spent the rest of the day in a haze of wonder as Jim took her throughout the complex to each of the animal enclosures. The *Megatheriums* had their own stand of trees and a pond to rest in. Jim explained how the *Thylacinus* habitat tried to mimic a particular area in Tasmania—down to the specific climate.



At the moa habitat, Malcolm, the other intern, joined them. He kept his hands in his pockets and jumped up and down with excitement as he squeaked over and over, mimicking the twelve-foot birds' calls. He was weird. Hazel liked him already.

That night, Hazel relaxed in the common area of the staff dormitory. With her mind still reeling from the day, she didn't realize Malcolm had come in until he spoke.

"So what's your theory?" Malcolm casually folded his arms on the table and, not so casually, knocked a stack of papers to the floor.

Hazel tried not to laugh. "On what?"

"Reviving **extinct** animals is like inventing the microchip. We're talking Nobel Prizes, faces on magazine covers—the works. Why is Dr. Z so **coy** about it?"

The question had crossed Hazel's mind, too. "Someone must know. Otherwise where's the money coming from? This place must cost a fortune to run."

Malcolm touched his finger to his nose, then pointed at Hazel.



"You've hit the nail on the board, or the head of the nail, or something," he said. "I guess I messed up that metaphor, but it doesn't matter—something fishy is going on here."

Malcolm seemed like a regular **conspiracy theorist**. Hazel found it funny and decided to egg him on. "Do you aim to find out what it is?"

"If this were a movie, you bet, but since this is real life, I'll simply do my job. Besides, a lifetime of keeping my mouth shut seems an easier debt to handle than the crippling student loans of college and beyond. Know what I'm saying?"

Hazel thought she did know.



The next few weeks were hard work. As the **resident** interns, Hazel and Malcolm were given every job anyone else didn't want to do—shoveling poop and cleaning enclosures, fetching equipment for different people. Some of the staff even started referring to them as "gophers" because they were always being asked to "go for" one thing or another. Occasionally, the staff gave them other tasks, such as counting the number of golden-toad tadpoles produced from Buckland's six breeding pairs—something they quickly realized was impossible.

In spite of all this, Hazel was thrilled. She loved working around these amazing animals and seeing how they behaved. She especially loved visiting Eve, who would reach out her trunk and inspect Hazel's pockets for treats, rumbling pleasantly.

Hazel sometimes discovered an animal missing from an enclosure during her rounds. When she pointed it out to Jim, he checked a small tablet and explained that the animal had been moved to one of the other compounds for observation, or that it was being treated for some illness. Sometimes the animal came back, but sometimes it didn't.

One day, while Hazel and Malcolm ate their cafeteria lunch in a grassy area beside one of the warehouses, they saw Jim and another keeper loading an Entelodont into a **transport**. The piglike creature was enormous, the size of a buffalo.

“Doesn’t look too happy,” Malcolm remarked as the beast bellowed and crashed into the side of the cage. “People call them ‘terror pigs,’ but they’re really more like hippos.”

“I can see that,” Hazel replied. “Wonder where they’re taking it. Seems pretty healthy to me.”

Just then, a large white SUV with black tinted windows pulled up, and out popped a small man with white hair and a goatee. He was dressed as if he were going on a safari—not looking at animals in the far **reaches** of Wyoming.

A woman climbed out the other side of the vehicle, wearing a nice blouse, slacks, heels, and a **strained** expression.

“Dr. Zudinitich!” Malcolm whispered.

“Wow. I didn’t recognize her.”

“That’s because in most pictures she’s in a lab coat, wearing goggles, with her hair up. He must be a big shot.”



As they watched, the man walked around the transport, examining the Entelodont with great interest, a broad smile showing artificially white teeth. He said something that they couldn't hear, and Dr. Zudinitich forced a smile. Hazel could tell she didn't really like the man, nor did she really want to be there. The man seemed able to tell, too, and he redirected his attention toward Jim, who proved more friendly.

After a few minutes, the man and Dr. Zudinitich climbed back in the vehicle and drove off. Jim climbed into the transport and left in the opposite direction.

"That was odd," Malcolm muttered. "He must have been pretty important to pull Dr. Z out of her lab and get to inspect an animal up close like that."

Hazel could see Malcolm's gears turning. He pointed to where the other keeper who had loaded the Entelodont into the transport was waving them over.

"Back to work," Malcolm said.



That evening, Hazel watched a movie on her computer for a while, but she couldn't really concentrate. The smiling man's face kept forcing its way into her mind. The smile, with its too-white teeth, had a quality that made her uneasy. She had seen the same expression on some of the predators at feeding time. She decided to take a walk and let the cool night air clear her head.

Outside, she felt better: everything seemed different at night. She heard some of the **nocturnal** animals making noises, but other than that,

everything seemed peacefully quiet. She stuck her hands in her pockets and set off in no particular direction.

It was dark, but by now she knew the buildings inside and out. The dark night sky let her see the stars that filled it—more stars than she'd ever seen before. Before she knew it, Hazel had walked to Eve's enclosure. They had returned Adam not long after Hazel arrived, and she could hear the pair snoring behind the locked door. She smiled at the sound.

In the distance, she saw a pair of headlights bouncing down the dirt road that led between the compounds. As the lights drew closer, she could tell they didn't belong to one of the jeeps people usually took. This one sounded more like a transport vehicle, maybe bringing a new species, or a baby. She decided to wait around.

The transport came through the gates and pulled up to what the staff called the "feeding station," one of the small buildings where the animals' food was prepared. Jim hopped out of the driver's side, and two other keepers climbed out the passenger's.

Nothing seemed to be moving inside the vehicle as Jim pulled the back doors open, but it was difficult to see with so little light. She heard the crinkling of tarps as the keepers reached into the transport and pulled out something large. It made a dull thump as it hit the ground. They reached in and pulled out three more tarps.
Thump. Thump. Thump.

Hazel wanted to turn away, but she couldn't. One by one, the keepers lifted the tarps and pulled them toward the large door, into the light. They dropped the first one, and Hazel could make out what looked like part of an animal. The second one was larger, and she could just make out the shoulder of the same kind of animal. It had a few small holes in it, almost like bullet holes.

Then they dropped the third tarp, and she saw the head of the Entelodont, its huge tongue lolling sickly out the side of its open mouth.

Hazel covered her gasp with her hand and slid back into the shadows, not sure what to do. Maybe it wasn't what it looked like. Entelodonts were pretty fierce, and this one might have tried to attack someone. Maybe it was too sick and they had to put it down, though she couldn't imagine why the keepers would shoot it rather than do something more **humane**.



She made her way back to the dormitory, troubling questions tumbling through her brain. Had the man with the white teeth hunted the creature? Did the researchers and Dr. Zudinitich know about it? And of all the buildings to drag a dead animal to . . . why the feeding station?

Hazel climbed the stairs to her room and locked the door behind her.



The next morning, Hazel was still in shock. She had barely slept, and the image of the dead Entelodont kept repeating whenever she closed her eyes. She didn't know the whole story yet, though. She needed to talk to Jim.

After breakfast, the keeper team had their morning meeting. When it finished, Hazel asked Jim if she could talk to him in private.

"Sure," he said, smiling. "Please, step into my office."

He opened the doors to his jeep, and they both climbed in. Once the doors were closed, it took Hazel a moment to gather the words, but soon she described what she'd seen the previous night. Jim looked out the windshield at the complex and nodded.

"When Dr. Z first offered me this position, I found the idea of letting billionaires hunt extinct animals for sport disgusting. I had cared for animals in zoos since I was your age, and I couldn't bring myself to do it—so I refused."

Jim turned to look at Hazel. "Then she explained the good we could do. These people pay huge amounts of money for us to raise these

animals so they can hunt and, in some cases, eat them. While we raise these creatures, we learn about them—how they behave, raise young, survive—information that scientists have only **speculated** about until now.

“The money has also allowed us to bring back recently extinct animals. The golden toad and the Zanzibar leopard were both killed off because of humans. We’re working toward releasing these creatures back into the wild. They have a chance now because the money has allowed us to increase **conservation** efforts around the globe.

“Last year alone, the organization purchased and saved tens of thousands of acres of rainforest and wetlands in Florida, India, and South America. It funded **captive breeding** programs for endangered animals in zoos throughout the United States and Europe. It funded research trips into the most remote regions on Earth to discover new species, which we never could have done if it weren’t for the money raised here from the legal hunting of twenty-seven animals—many of which have been extinct so long, their natural habitats no longer exist.”



Jim's arguments made sense, but Hazel couldn't accept the thought of Eve running from some rich dude with a big gun while he stalked her for the most expensive dinner of his life.

"Look," Jim said, placing his hand on her shoulder, "we're doing good work here—important work—and sometimes that requires making difficult choices. You have to do what's right for you, and I can't tell you what that is."

You're a great worker, and I'd be happy to keep you on. You can also make the choice to end your internship. It's completely up to you."

Hazel took a deep breath. "Thanks for the talk, Jim. I have some things to think about."

"Sounds like it. Could you think about them while you clean up the mammoth enclosure?"

Hazel nodded and climbed out of the truck.



She spent more time than usual cleaning Eve and Adam's enclosure. In her eyes, the mammoths were wild animals with as much right to live as any other; in the eyes of the organization, they were property, like cattle or pigs, except unlike livestock, these two animals could potentially save thousands.

On her way to feed the golden toads, she stopped by the Zanzibar leopards' area. Most of the cats slumbered in various trees, but one young one was awake, playfully batting around a coconut. Its movements were often clumsy, but occasionally, she could glimpse something in its form that hinted at what made these creatures great hunters.



The coat that had caused humans to hunt the leopards to extinction was just starting to come in. Someday, could this one be released back into the wild?



That night, Malcolm found her eating dinner outside and sat down beside her on the grass. “Okay, you need to spill it already. You’ve been moping all day, not talking to anyone, and you can’t leave me in the dark.”

Hazel sighed and explained everything to Malcolm. He sat quietly and listened.

"Wow," he sighed when she finished. "This might be the first of my theories that's proven true. My mind is blown."

"That's it?" Hazel snapped. "That's all you can say about this?"

Malcolm shrugged. "What can we do about it? We leave here in some sort of quiet **protest**, and we lose our college funding, but we get to keep the moral **high ground**."

Hazel looked at her feet—she really needed the funding to afford school.

"I guess you could leave and tell the press," he continued. "The program would likely be shut down, and Buckland Wildlife would be killed in the **media**. Buckland would likely come after you and your family with the 'severe' consequences that lawyer guy talked about."

Hazel's eyes burned as tears rolled down her cheeks. After a while, people started leaving the cafeteria and heading back to work. Malcolm finished his sandwich before he spoke again.



“Or you could do what I’m going to do, and accept a less than perfect situation for the greater good of all.”

“Not *all*,” Hazel said.

“Not all,” Malcolm agreed, “but when has anything ever been for the good of all?”

Hazel didn’t know. She only knew that she faced a choice, and no matter what she chose, someone—man, beast, or both—was going to get hurt.

Glossary

captive breeding (<i>n.</i>)	the breeding of animals in captivity for release into the wild (p. 17)
compound (<i>n.</i>)	a walled-off area containing a group of buildings (p. 3)
conservation (<i>n.</i>)	the protection of wild lands and the living things found there (p. 17)
conspiracy theorist (<i>n.</i>)	one who believes events or situations are the results of a secret plot (p. 8)
coy (<i>adj.</i>)	unwilling or reluctant to share sensitive information (p. 7)
extinct (<i>adj.</i>)	no longer in existence (p. 7)
genetic (<i>adj.</i>)	having to do with heredity and variation in living things (p. 4)
high ground (<i>n.</i>)	a morally superior position (p. 21)
humane (<i>adj.</i>)	causing as little pain as possible (p. 14)
internship (<i>n.</i>)	a temporary job where a student or trainee works to gain experience in a particular profession (p. 3)
media (<i>n.</i>)	mass communication, such as newspapers, television, or the Internet, through which information is given to the public (p. 21)
monitor (<i>v.</i>)	to observe the progress of something (p. 3)

nocturnal (<i>adj.</i>)	active at night rather than during the day (p. 12)
perpetuity (<i>n.</i>)	the state of lasting forever or for a very long time (p. 3)
protest (<i>n.</i>)	an action to express strong disagreement or disapproval (p. 21)
ramifications (<i>n.</i>)	consequences that result from a decision or action (p. 3)
reaches (<i>n.</i>)	the outer limits of an area or region (p. 10)
reproductive (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to the process of producing offspring (p. 4)
resident (<i>adj.</i>)	having to do with a person or other animal that lives or works in a place (p. 9)
specimens (<i>n.</i>)	examples of something used for comparison, study, or display (p. 4)
speculated (<i>v.</i>)	guessed based on ideas and theories that are not proven (p. 17)
strained (<i>adj.</i>)	showing great effort; tense, unnatural, or uneasy (p. 10)
transport (<i>n.</i>)	a vehicle that carries animals or things from one place to another (p. 10)
violating (<i>v.</i>)	breaking a law or rule (p. 3)

The Zoo of Extinct Animals

A *Reading A-Z Level Z1 Leveled Book*

Word Count: 2,738

Connections

Writing

If you were Hazel, what decision would you make and why? Write a friendly letter to Malcolm explaining the decision you made.

Science

Research one of the extinct animals from the book. Create an informational brochure for your classmates about that animal, including information about where and when it lived.

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