

Abstract

Title: Engaging Extinction: De-Extinction, Sustainability and Society

De-extinction is a new and controversial approach to sustainability that foresees using advanced biotechnologies to reverse the biodiversity crisis and perhaps even to resurrect extinct species. This talk considers the ethical, cultural and social implications of this approach to wildlife conservation, with a view towards developing a framework for effective public consultation on de-extinction. Drawing upon sources ranging from science to science fiction, I focus on the stories we tell about extinction and the meanings we ascribe to nature and technology. I argue that the use of biotechnology in conservation will have significant repercussions for wilderness and for society. The degree to which we engage collectively with both the prosaic and the fantastic aspects of biotechnological conservation will shape the boundaries and ethics of our desire to restore lost worlds. Case examples for this talk will be drawn from de-extinction projects in Australia (Tasmanian tiger), New Zealand (moa), and the United States (passenger pigeon).

Amy Fletcher