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Opening extract from

Can We Save the Tiger?

Written by

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Published by

Walker Books Ltd

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The world's quite a big place, you know. But it's not that big, when you consider how much there is to squeeze into it.

After all, it's home not just to billions of people, but to the most amazing number of other kinds of living things too. And we're all jostling for space.

Us humans have changed the world a lot over the years, to make room for ourselves and to produce the things we need. We've turned forests into farmland, dammed rivers and built towns and cities to live in.

Some of the other animals and plants that we share the Earth with have coped with the changes very well. But some haven't.

In fact, some have coped so badly that they're not here any more.

They're extinct.

Raphus cucullatus

Where found: *Mauritius in the Indian Ocean*

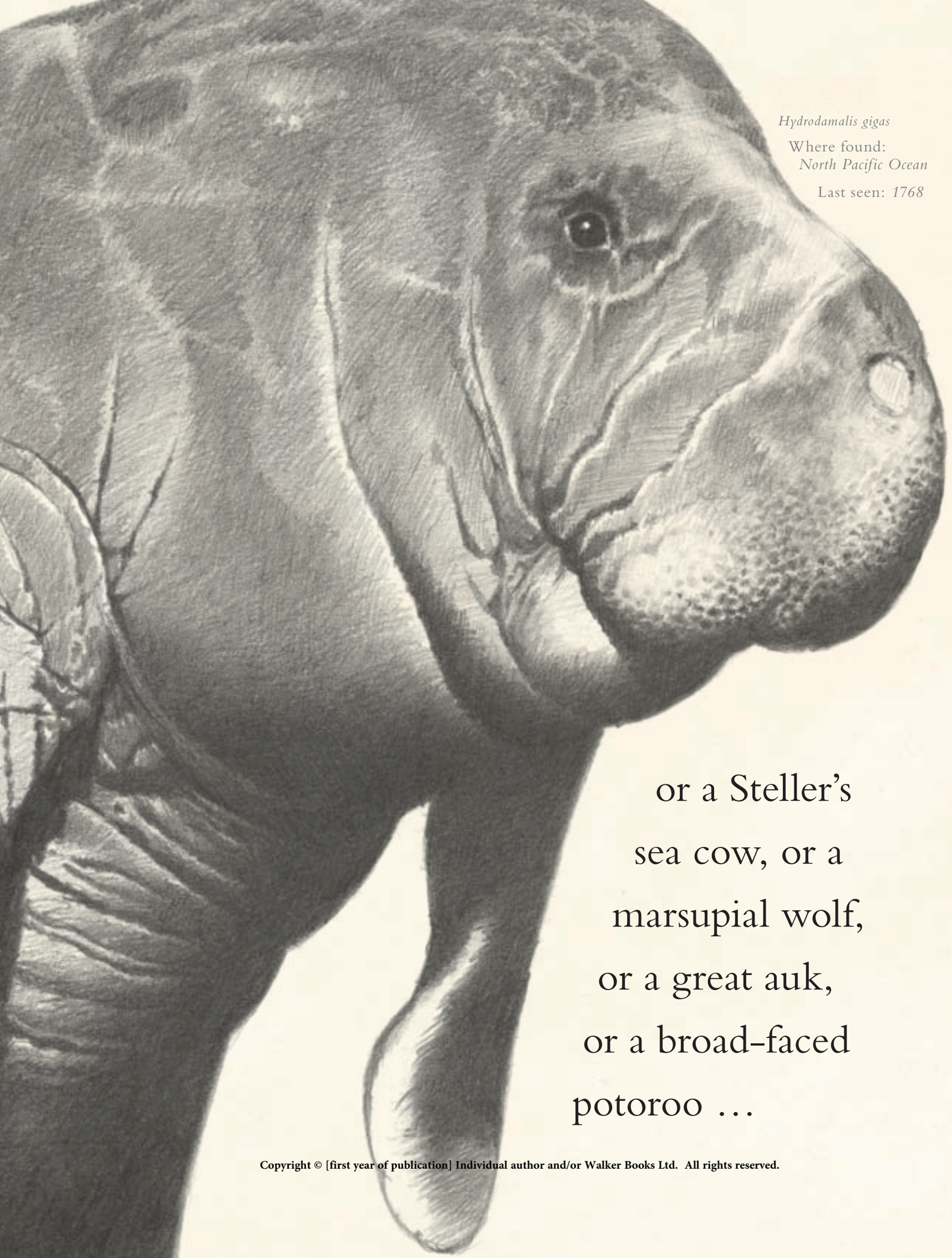
Last seen: *1665*

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Which means we'll never see a live dodo ...



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Hydrodamalis gigas

Where found:
North Pacific Ocean

Last seen: *1768*

or a Steller's
sea cow, or a
marsupial wolf,
or a great auk,
or a broad-faced
potoroo …

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Thylacinus cynocephalus
Where found: *Tasmania*
Last seen: *1936*

Potorous platyops
Where found: *Australia*
Last seen: *1875*

Pinguinus impennis
Where found: *North Atlantic Ocean*
Last seen: *1852*

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… or … I could go on and on.

And then there are all those other species that are still around, but only just.

They're in danger of becoming extinct, just like the dodo and Steller's sea cow.

There are so many endangered species all over the world that it's hard to pick out some special ones.

Still, I'm sure you'll all agree that tigers are pretty special…



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Panthera tigris

Where found: *Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russian Federation, Thailand, Vietnam*

Size: *weighs up to 300 kg; measures up to 3.5 m long (the biggest cat in the world)*

Lifespan: *up to 20 years in zoos, usually up to 15 or so in the wild*

Habits: *usually lives in forests and sometimes in grassland, swampy areas or farmland. Lives alone (except for mothers looking after their young)*

Breeding: *normally two to four cubs are born. Only the mother looks after them. They stay with her until they are about two years old*

Eats: *other animals. Usually hunts at night*

Number left: *fewer than 2,500 breeding adults in the wild*

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Tigers are big and they're beautiful and they're fierce. And all this makes life difficult for them these days.

Because they're big they need a lot of space. But the countries where they live, like India and Indonesia, have huge numbers of people in them too, all trying to make a living and all needing to be fed.

And because they're beautiful, people have always hunted them for their skins. They also kill them for their bones and meat to use as medicines.

And because tigers are fierce, they don't mix very well with humans. They usually eat deer and antelope and other wild animals, but when there are people nearby, they may end up eating farm animals like cows, sheep and goats instead. Sometimes (though hardly ever), some tigers, usually old or sick ones, end up eating people too.



So if you were a poor farmer trying to make a living with a couple of cows and a few goats, you might not be too happy if you found there was a hungry tiger living nearby. And if you knew that someone might pay you more for a tiger skin and some bones than you could earn in three whole months working in the fields, then you might find it very tempting to set a trap or two, even if you knew it was against the law.

Perhaps it's not too surprising that there aren't that many tigers left.

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