

Extinction Encounters: Vanishing Forms, Human Rights, and the Ethics of Retrieval



Karianne's Pet by Carl D. Buell, 2005

With the current “sixth mass extinction” comes a mounting sense of environmental crisis staved off with a variety of rescue strategies and technologies. Life on Earth seems now more than ever to be careening off a brink. Yet the phenomenon of species extinction has long shaped subjective human experience. Evidence suggests that fossils of extinct animals and first-hand witnessing of sole survivors may have inspired people’s religious beliefs, folklore, mythology, and taboos. A Western discourse of extinction, mourning the disappearance of indigenous populations and species, has lent moral purpose to salvage ethnography and conservation. Today’s extinction discourse not only forewarns us of the dangers of biodiversity loss. It also motivates a politics of cultural identity, as marginalized societies attempt to resurrect dying languages and traditions. This conference will reflect on the parallel processes and collateral effects of biological and cultural extinction. Taken together, the studies challenge the conception of human rights in cases where cultural self-determination jeopardizes species lives, and where operations of species rescue impinge on certain human communities more than others.

A public conference sponsored by the
Department of Anthropology and the
Center for Genocide and Human Rights

Thursday, October 30, 2008

9-6pm, Teleconference Room, Alexander Library
Rutgers University, New Brunswick

The Social History of Extinctions

Janet Chernela, University of Maryland

Marginality and Myth

John Colarusso, McMaster University

**Tortoise Soup for the Soul: Finding a Space for Human History
in a Galápagos Dynasty**

Jill Constantino, Harvard University

**Can Ethnography and Ethnozoology Shed Light on Extinct
Species? A View from Flores (Eastern Indonesia)**

Gregory Forth, University of Alberta

Is Extinction Inevitable? A Case Study in Madagascar

Laurie R. Godfrey, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Knowledge Extinction and the Politics of Identity in China

Michael Hathaway, Simon Fraser University

**Ecocide, Genetic Rescue and the Moral ARTs of Wildlife
Conservation**

Tracey Heatherington, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

**Last Words, Final Thoughts: Collateral Extinctions in Maliseet
Language Death**

Bernard C. Perley, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

**Species and Citizens: Captive Breeding, National Security,
and the Call of the Wild**

Genese Sodikoff, Rutgers University, Newark

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