

NYBG/125

WORKSHOP
BIODIVERSITY AND ITS HISTORIES



April 24-25, 2017

Workshop co-hosted by the NYBG Humanities Institute and
The Center for Science & Society, Columbia University

With additional support from the Dorothy Borg Research Program of Columbia's
Weatherhead East Asian Institute, the Columbia Center for International History,
and the Mellon Foundation



Earthly Paradise (detail), by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, ca. 1615, Mauritshuis, The Hague.

Support for the Humanities Institute of The New York Botanical Garden provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2017

Columbia University Alumni Center

622 West 113th Street, between Broadway and Riverside Dr.

Shapiro Conference room, 8th floor

9:00–9:15 a.m. Coffee and Pastries

9:15–9:30 a.m. Welcome and Introduction: Deborah Coen, Barnard College

9:30–11:15 a.m.

Ideas of Diversity in Context

- Paul S. White, “Darwin’s Divergence”
- Megan Raby, “From Tropicality to Biodiversity”
- Kristoffer Whitney, “Homeless Biodiversity”
- Chair: Hilary Callahan, Professor of Biology, Barnard College

11:15–11:30 a.m.

Coffee Break

11:30 a.m.–1:15 p.m.

Human-Animal Encounters

- Baijayanti Chatterjee, “Ideas and Practices of Conservation in Pre-Colonial and Early-Colonial India”
- Peter Alagona, “Concrete Jungle”
- Emily Hutcheson, “Primate Conservation under the Banner of Global Health”
- Chair: Karl Jacoby, Professor of History, Columbia University

1:15–2:45 p.m.

Lunch

2:45–4:30 p.m.

Biodiversity as Discourse and Myth

- Paul Kreitman, “Biodiversity Production on a Hawaiian Border Island”
- Jennifer Lee Johnson, “Same as it Never Was: *Enkejje*, *Haplochromines*, or Just *Trash*”
- David Taylor, “*Guanoroca*: Retelling an Origin Myth of Biodiversity in a Time of Climate Change”
- Chair: Joanna Radin, Assistant Professor of History of Medicine, Yale University

5:00–6:00 p.m.

Urban Biodiversity Walking Tour, with Daniel Atha, Director of Conservation Outreach, NYBG

6:30 p.m.

Dinner for Invited Speakers

TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2017

The New York Botanical Garden

2900 Southern Blvd, Bronx, NY (please use the Mosholu Entrance Gate)

LuEsther T. Mertz Library, Library Building, 6th floor Reading Room

10:00–10:15 a.m. Coffee and Pastries

10:15–10:30 a.m. Welcome and Introduction: Vanessa Sellers, Humanities Research Coordinator

10:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m. Experiencing Species Loss

- Kyuhyun Han, “Seeing the Forest like a State”
- Leo Douglas, “Parrots, Bananas, and Neoliberalism”
- Elizabeth Hennessy, “From Edible to Endemic: Darwin, Galápagos, and How Giant Tortoises Changed from Food to Endangered Icons of Evolution”
- Chair: David Kohn, Director of the AMNH Darwin Manuscripts Project

12:15–1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30–2:30 p.m. Guided Walk through Native Plant Garden, with Michael Hagen, Curator of the Rock Garden and Native Plant Garden, NYBG

2:45–4:00 p.m.

Seeds and Weeds

- Helen Curry, “Garden Variety Diversity: Heirloom Seed saving in Britain and the United States”
- Zachary Nowak, “Sex in the Reeds”
- Chair: Courtney Fullilove, Assistant Professor of History, Wesleyan University

4:00–4:45 p.m. Closing Discussion

Presenters

Peter Alagona is an associate professor of history, geography, and environmental studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He received his PhD at UCLA, and held postdoctoral fellowships at Harvard and Stanford universities. A historian and geographer by training, his research focuses on the relationships between humans and other species—particularly charismatic wildlife—and the changing wildland, rural, and urban habitats they share. He is the author of *After the Grizzly: Endangered Species and the Politics of Place in California*, published by the University of California Press in 2013.

Baijayanti Chatterjee is currently in the final year of her PhD. at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. Her research is on the environmental history of eighteenth century Bengal. It explores how the ecology of the Bengal province shaped political and economic developments in the course of the eighteenth century. She holds a master's degree in Medieval History from Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Helen Anne Curry is a Senior Lecturer in History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Churchill College. She received her PhD in History from Yale University in May 2012. Her book *Evolution Made to Order: Plant Breeding and Technological Innovation in Twentieth Century America* (University of Chicago Press, 2016) traces the history of several early technologies used to modify genes and chromosomes, including their development as research tools by biologists, their application as novel methods of plant breeding, and their celebration in American popular culture as means of engineering life. Her current research considers the history of global conservation, in particular efforts made to preserve the genetic diversity of agricultural crop species through the practice of seed banking.

Leo Douglas is a visiting scientist at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York City, adjunct faculty at Columbia University, and the immediate past-president of BirdsCaribbean, the largest international NGO focusing on the conservation of birds and their habitats within the greater Caribbean basin. He is also a research scholar in the Department of Geography/Geology and honorary research fellow in the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD) at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica. He holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University. His previous professional experiences include work with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in New York, and as a contract worker for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID-Jamaica). He describes his work as "Nature and Society Geography" as it lies with the complex nexus of human-environment relations within space, place, biodiversity and society.

Kyuhyun Han is a third-year graduate student at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She studies human-animal relations in modern Chinese history. Her MA thesis "Precious Animals: State-Wildlife Relations in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1965" was on the national animal collection of the so-called "precious animals," which designated wildlife that deserved special government protection, in the 1950s and 1960s. She investigated the ways in which precious wildlife was linked to the larger issue of diplomacy, environmental consciousness, and territorial conflicts. She is currently working on the bureaucratic management of forestry and hunting in Northeast China from 1949 to 1965, viewing forest as a site of the complicated relationship between the central government, local governments, local ethnic minorities, and the indigenous environment.

Elizabeth Hennessy is an assistant professor of History and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a fellow at the Rachel Carson Center in Munich, Germany. She completed her PhD in geography at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and works at the intersection of environmental history, political ecology, science and technology studies, and animal studies. She is currently writing her first book, which tells the story of the giant tortoises of the Galápagos Islands to examine the politics of evolutionary understandings of nature. At Wisconsin, she serves as faculty advisor for the digital magazine *Edge Effects*, run by graduate students of the Center for Culture, History and Environment, and teaches Latin American environmental history, animal history, and a course on the history of the Anthropocene.

Jennifer Lee Johnson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Purdue University, and a member of Purdue's Building Sustainable Communities Initiative and the Purdue Climate Change Research Center. Her research is historically rooted, ethnographically engaged, and focused at the confluence of gender, vernacular practices, and the multispecies politics of contemporary economic and environmental sustainability. Johnson's current book project foregrounds African women's work with diverse species and forms of fish – both indigenous and introduced – alongside the development of global markets for African fish products to retheorize the intersection of history, legality, and sustainability in and around Africa's largest body of freshwater, where she has conducted long-term field research since 2007. Johnson has also worked on fishery sustainability issues for governmental and non-governmental organizations, including the Marine Fish Conservation Network, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Blue Ocean Institute.

Paul Kreitman's research interests include environmental history, global history, commodity history, and histories of science and technology. He received his PhD in History from Princeton University in 2015, with a doctoral dissertation entitled "Feathers, Fertilizer and States of Nature: Uses of Albatrosses in the U.S.-Japan Borderlands". He is currently working on a book manuscript exploring the relationship between resource extraction, nature conservation and state formation in the North Pacific. His second project examines the political ecology of excrement in the Greater Tokyo area, focusing on the slow obsolescence of night soil fertilizer over the course of the twentieth century. Paul received his BA from the University of Oxford in 2006, after which he worked as a carbon offset consultant at Mitsubishi UFJ Securities in Tokyo. He joins Columbia after a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of London's Institute of Historical Research, jointly affiliated with SOAS.

Zachary Nowak is an environmental historian pursuing his PhD in American Studies at Harvard University. His dissertation is a spatial history of nineteenth-century American train stations, but his interests include food history and so-called invasive species. Nowak is the author of "Truffle: A Global History," the editor and translator of "Inventing The Pizzeria," and co-editor of "Representing Italy Through Food."

Megan Raby is assistant professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin. Her book, *American Tropics: The Caribbean Roots of Biodiversity Science*, examines how fieldwork in the circum-Caribbean shaped US ecologists' ideas about the diversity of tropical life during the twentieth century. It is forthcoming in fall 2017 with the University of North Carolina Press.

David Taylor is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Humanities in the Sustainability Program at Stony Brook University. His writing crosses disciplinary boundaries and genres—poetry, creative non-fiction, scholarship and science writing. However, at the core of his work always is the concern for environmental sustainability and community. He is the author and editor of seven books. David has traveled to Cuba for over four years collaborating with writers, artists, and scholars at the University of Havana, Artes Escencias Cubanas, UNEAC (Cuban national writers organization), and the Fondation Antonio Nunez Jimenez de la Naturaleza y el Hombre.

Paul White is an editor on the Darwin Correspondence Project and teaches in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge. His publications include *Thomas Huxley: Making the 'Man of Science'* (Cambridge 2003), and various articles on 19th century science, literature, and culture, most recently 'Reading the Blush' (*Configurations* 2016) and 'Darwin's Home of Science and the Nature of Domesticity' (2016). He is currently writing a book 'Darwin Wept: the Evolution of Emotion'.

Kristoffer Whitney is an Assistant Professor in the Science, Technology & Society Department at the Rochester Institute of Technology. He completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Holtz Center for Science and Technology Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and holds a PhD in the History and Sociology of Science from the University of Pennsylvania. His work has focused on the intersections between endangered species science and policy, and a recent publication on the subject, entitled "Domesticating Nature?," was recently awarded the 2016 David Edge Prize for the best article in the area of science and technology studies by the Society for Social Studies of Science (4S). He is currently researching the sociotechnical aspects of marketing-based approaches to environmental conservation.

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