

Requiem

in memoriam
twelve recently extinct species

A SOUND INSTALLATION BY STEVE NORTON

for EARTH DAY
APRIL 22 – APRIL 25, 2021
GOETHE-INSTITUT BOSTON
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

The sounds you are hearing will never again be heard in the wild. All of the species—ten birds and two frogs—audible in this installation are now extinct. You are able to hear these sounds because the creatures that made them went extinct during the era of recorded sound; this is a unique moment in the history of human-driven extinction, and the beginning of a new era.

Following is a catalog of the creatures who, unwittingly, provided the sounds heard in this installation.

Rabb's Fringe-limbed Tree Frog (*Ecnomiohyla rabborum*)

RANGE Central Panama

EXTINCT The last known individual, whose voice is heard here, perished in captivity in Atlanta, Georgia in September, 2016.

CAUSES Habitat loss, chytrid fungus epidemic.

RECORDING Mark Mandica, Atlanta, Georgia, December 2014

Kaua'i 'Ō'ō (*Moho braccatus*)

RANGE Island of Kaua'i, Hawaii

EXTINCT Declared extinct by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, hereafter) in 2000; last reported seen or heard in 1987.

CAUSES Habitat loss, introduced species.

RECORDING C. Fred Zeillemaker, Kaua'i, Hawaii, June 1975

Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis principalis*)

RANGE South-eastern United States, Cuba

EXTINCT The IUCN (who take a conservative approach) lists the Ivory-billed Woodpecker as “critically endangered/possibly extinct.” Last confirmed report was in 1944.

CAUSES Habitat loss, specifically logging and agricultural clearing.

RECD'G Arthur A. Allen, Peter P. Kellogg, Louisiana, May 1935

Po‘o-uli

(*Melamprosops phaeosoma*)

RANGE Maui, Hawaii

EXTINCT Declared extinct by the IUCN in 2019. No reports have been confirmed since 2004.

CAUSES Habitat loss, spread of disease-carrying mosquitoes, and predation by introduced species.

RECORDING H. Douglas Pratt, Maui, Hawaii, July 1975

Kāma‘o

(*Myadestes myadestinus*)

RANGE Kaua‘i, Hawaii

EXTINCT Declared extinct by the IUCN in 2004. Last reliable report was in 1985.

CAUSES Disease carried by introduced mosquitoes, and destruction and degradation of forests.

RECORDING Robert J. Shallenberger and H. Douglas Pratt, Kaua‘i, Hawaii, July 1975

Golden Toad

(*Incilius periglenes*)

RANGE Reserva Biológica Monteverde, Costa Rica

EXTINCT Declared extinct by the IUCN 2004. Last reliable report was in 1989.

CAUSES Likely causes are the species’ restricted range, global warming, chytridiomycosis and airborne pollution.

RECORDING Arnoud B. van den Berg, Puntarenas, Costa Rica, May 1981

Guam Flycatcher
(*Myiagra freycineti*)

RANGE Guam

EXTINCT Declared extinct by the IUCN in 1994. Last seen prior to 1983.

CAUSES Predation by the introduced brown tree-snake.

RECORDING H. Douglas Pratt, Guam, August 1978

O‘ahu ‘Alauahio
(*Paroreomyza maculata*)

RANGE O‘ahu, Hawaii

EXTINCT Listed as “critically endangered, possibly extinct” by the IUCN in 1994; last reliable observation was in 1985.

CAUSES Habitat loss due to development and agricultural clearing; disease spread by introduced mosquitoes habitat shifting due to climate change.

RECORDING Timothy A. Burr, O‘ahu, Hawaii, date unknown

Atitlán Grebe
(*Podilymbus gigas*)

RANGE Lake Atitlán, Guatemala

EXTINCT Listed as extinct by the IUCN in 1994; the species disappeared between 1983 and 1986.

CAUSES Competition and predation by introduced large-mouth bass; pressure on breeding sites from local reed-cutting and tourism development. The murder of the government game warden for the national park during the political unrest of 1982 and falling lake levels following the earthquake of 1976 are likely to be the factors which drove the population to extinction. Drowning in gill nets and disturbance by increasing boat traffic have also been suggested as contributory factors.

RECORDING Anne LaBastille, Lake Atitlán shoreline, Sololá, Guatemala, May 1963

‘Ō‘ū (*Psittirostra psittacea*)

RANGE Formerly widespread across the islands of Hawaii

EXTINCT Listed as “critically endangered, possibly extinct” by the IUCN in 1994; last reliable observation was of two individuals in 1989.

CAUSES Habitat loss to logging and agriculture, decline of a primary food source due to pressure from introduced rats and ungulates; habitat degradation by feral pigs which benefitted introduced mosquitoes carrying avian diseases are all implicated in the rapid decline of this species.

RECORDING Robert J. Shallenberger and H. Douglas Pratt, Kaua‘i, Hawaii, July 1975

Cozumel Thrasher (*Toxostoma guttatum*)

RANGE Cozumel Island, Quintana Roo, Mexico

EXTINCT Listed as critically endangered by the IUCN in 2000; last reliable observation was possibly as recently as 2006, but frequent surveys have turned up very few records.

CAUSES Intense hurricane activity has had a drastic effect on the species; introduced boa constrictors, cats and other mammals are the leading hypothesised threat; habitat fragmentation as a result of the development of tourism on the island and impact from recreation are also affecting the species.

RECORDING Andres M. Sada, Cozumel Island, Mexico, October 1991

Bachman’s Warbler (*Vermivora bachmanii*)

RANGE South-eastern United States, Cuba

EXTINCT Listed as “critically endangered, possibly extinct” by the IUCN in 1994; has not been reported since 1988.

CAUSES Drainage of river-bottom swamplands, and the near-total clearance of canebrakes in the USA, combined with the conversion of much of Cuba to sugarcane plantation, offer the best explanation for the disappearance of this species.

RECORDING G. Stuart Keith, South Carolina, May 1959

PLEASE NOTE

Requiem will run indefinitely, or until it is powered off. Occasional silences will occur. This does not mean that the piece is over. The silences come and go due to the indeterminate relationships among the animals' sound files.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The value of the existence of these recordings cannot be overstated. The recordings heard in this piece were generously provided by the following research institutions:

The Macaulay Library of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology,
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/>

The Amphibian Foundation, Atlanta, Georgia,
<http://www.amphibianfoundation.org/>

Data on these species was drawn extensively from the International Union of the Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2017-3.
<http://www.iucnredlist.org>. Accessed on 14 January 2020.

Many thanks to N.B.Aldrich and the University of Maine Intermedia MFA program, and to Michael Rosenstein for his generous and attentive assistance with the Boston-area installations. Grateful thanks to the many fine hosts of this piece: Spaceus.co; Gordon Hanson-Grodsky; The Cannery, Penobscot, Maine; Massachusetts Audubon Boston Nature Center; Fields Pond Audubon Center, Maine; Museum of Design, Atlanta; Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech; and Goethe-Institut, Boston.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Steve Norton is a sound artist and musician. His artistic research examines electroacoustic music, improvisation as a method, the environment, modernity and society.

Steve's practice is currently focused on the gathering of field-recorded sound which he utilizes in electroacoustic composition and performative contexts. His interest is to increasingly bring the outside world into his work via field recording and topical decisions which engage critical issues. This is exemplified by the work at hand, *Requiem*, a four-channel sound composition on the topic of extinction, created using the voices of recently-extinct birds and frogs.

Steve has been exhibiting, composing and performing in the United States and Canada for over 30 years, and has a dozen installations and over twenty-five recorded releases to his credit. He holds an MFA in Intermedia from the University of Maine.

Reach him at senorton99@gmail.com.

The **Cornell** Lab  of Ornithology
Exploring and Conserving Nature



amphibianfoundation
PROTECTING AMPHIBIANS AND THEIR HABITATS