

After None: Memorialising animal species extinction through monuments

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Upon entering the Old New Land gallery of the National Museum of Australia in February 2016, I was confronted with a large shiny galvanized iron structure.¹ Its slightly angular walls lean out at the top toward the visitor, giving the impression that it might perhaps tip over. On the end facing me is a wall with an epigraph in front of a vanilla-coloured web of sketched lines. ‘Endling’ it says in vanilla-coloured cursive text on the sunken panel, with ‘disappearing’ and ‘vanish’ at the bottom. On the semi-transparent layer on top, a black text stands out more clearly: ‘Endling / The last of a species’. Underneath that is a text about extinction in Australia:

In the past 200 years, 18 mammal species and about 100 plant species have become extinct. The loss of the thylacine has become legend, but many smaller animals and plants have also vanished unnoticed. Australia’s current rate of extinctions is the highest in the world.

A thylacine, also known colloquially as a Tasmanian tiger, appears to gaze back at the viewer from a black-and-white photograph just beside the text. This thylacine and all others of its kind have long since vanished—there are none left. As I looked at this epigraph, it struck me that the walls of the box are filled with engravings of the common and scientific names of extinct Australian species. These are the ‘unnoticed’ of the inscription, and yet there is an abundance of them (see Figure 14.1).

Figure 14.1 ‘Endling’ at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, February 2016.

Source: Photograph by author.

Passing through the door of the box, I entered a tomb—a sepulchre or mausoleum—for the thylacine. The body remnants of the thylacine stand on display like the bones in an ossuary. When I was there, these included a prehistoric mummified head and a full skeleton, but they change over time for conservation purposes: when the exhibit opened in 2001, it featured a thylacine skin and a full body preserved in formalin. None of these thylacines on display were the last thylacine, the endling, which was discarded by the zoo in Hobart after it died; yet, they take the place of this last, serving as a tactile stand-in for the end of the species.

This is no ordinary museum exhibit. It is a monument to extinction, and an intentional one at that. The feeling of this exhibit as a ‘memorial’ to extinction was specifically chosen according to the senior curator Mike Smith who led the exhibit design process.² How can we understand this monument as a physical manifestation of human remembrance of a species reduced to none?

Monumentalisation is a key element in the remembrance of the dead, from grave headstones to war monuments. These serve as markers of history to remind viewers of the past, as well as envision potential futures. Yet the meaning of a monument is not fixed. A

monument embodies a particular time and place, but is then experienced and re-read at later times.

Monuments have been criticized for creating static images of past events that culturally reify simplified and often nationalistic histories.³ A poignant example of the debate around monuments and memory arose in the context of a white supremacist march tied to an Civil War Confederate monument in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 that caused the death of one anti-march protester. An outpouring of public commentary by historians tried to contextualize the place of American Civil War monuments and question their contemporary uses.⁴ The monument, in these critiques, replaces the work of cultural memory with its physical form, with the possible end result of the loss of memory instead of bolstering it. The viewer is reduced to passive spectator instead of active contemplative participant in the event or with the person being commemorated. An alternate criticism is that public monuments are easily rendered invisible, as Robert Musil famously argued.⁵ Monuments can become banal through both familiarity and overdramatic representation of events which are seen as irrelevant for the viewer. In spite of these criticisms, monuments continue to be erected for civic figures, the fallen dead of war, and heroes of all types.

Although monumentalisation is thought of as a practice by humans to remember the loss of other humans, these memory practices stretch to encompass the non-humans in forms from pet cemeteries to warhorse memorials.⁶ Because humans are the commissioning agents of these works, studying memorials and the sentiments behind them gives us a glimpse into how those humans think about the relationship between humans (past, present, and future) and animals. Because monumentalisation generally involves honoring the subject, the animal commemorated is honored as worthy of being remembered. At the same time, monuments fix the human-animal relationship in space and time, which may lock the remembering into particular forms that prove relevant for future viewers.

This chapter examines monuments to animal extinction in public settings, covering several different types of public art including statuary, murals, and funerary forms. Some of the monuments honour particular species that have become extinct, whereas others mark extinction as an general event. These are works set up after the species population had been reduced to zero as a way of remembering the missing.

Work in environmental humanities has called for the cultivation of a new ethos in our human relationship with the more-than-human world, one that recognizes and makes a place for all.⁷ Extinction stories, in particular, might have the potential to raise awareness of the connections between humans and the non-human through mourning or care.⁸ While non-humans like crows might show some fleeting signs of grief, only humans as a species set up monuments to remember the past with the intention of bridging generational gaps and forming long-lasting collective memory. Just as Maurice Halbwachs's foundational work on collective memory prompted a surge in historical studies of the function of memory and commemoration of human-centered events, in particular the Holocaust and other traumatic histories,⁹ we need to theorize how we remember the histories of non-humans lost to violence and tragedy. By remembering extinct species through monumental works, species death has permanence and materiality that lasts into future generations.

The novelty of monumentalising extinction should not be underestimated. Species extinction was only recognised as a potential reality in the eighteenth century when losses of species like the Stellar sea cow became known.¹⁰ As Elizabeth Kolbert points out in her Pulitzer Prize winning book *The Sixth Extinction*, we are now living through the Earth's sixth mass faunal extinction event. The current rapid loss of species is fast gaining widespread

attention, including the claim by scientists that it represents an act of ‘biological annihilation’.¹¹ While the mass extinction of species has happened five times before, this time around, the extinction is being recorded when it happens; it is being remembered in human narrative. As humans have become aware of the extinction or imminent end of non-human animal species over the last two hundred years, there have been active attempts to understand, confront, or memorialize the loss of species which have zero individuals remaining.

Marking the passing of a pigeon

Wyalusing State Park in the far southwestern tip of Wisconsin sits in an old landscape. The indigenous population constructed effigy mounds, often in the shape of animals, on the ridges from 1400 to 750 years ago. The Sentinel Ridge Trail in the Park passes through a landscape of these mounds, marking the spot as a meeting point of life and death. Midway on the ridge, a dusty brown stone wall frames the edge of the steep bluff to the valley below where the Wisconsin River meets the mighty Mississippi. On a late March day in 2017 when I visited, the sky was grey and the trees were leafless, but the honking of some geese echoed in the distance. A rectangular bronze plaque stands out from the highest brick section (see Figure 14.2). A raised figure of a bird perching on a branch dominates the plaque. Coming nearer, the inscription comes into focus:

DEDICATED
TO THE LAST WISCONSIN
PASSENGER PIGEON
SHOT AT BABCOCK, SEPT 1899
THIS SPECIES BECAME EXTINCT
THROUGH THE AVARICE AND
THOUGHTLESSNESS OF MAN.

Figure 14.2 Memorial to the passenger pigeon in Wyalusing State Park, Wyalusing, Wisconsin, March 2017.

Source: Photograph by author.

This monument to the passenger pigeon dedicated in 1947 by the Wisconsin Ornithological Society commemorates the passing of a species, lamenting the direct role of humans in the event. The last known passenger pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) had not died in Wisconsin, but in nearby Ohio in 1914, only a month after the beginning of World War I. That last pigeon, named Martha, died in captivity of illness rather than being killed in the wild. But many millions of her kind had been shot or netted since the mid-1800s as food consumed both locally on the US Midwestern frontier and in distant east coast cities crammed with immigrants. The species’ quick disappearance from flocks which blackened the skies to none confounded many commentators. By the time this monument, the first dedicated to an extinct species in the world, was set up, the passenger pigeon was fading into the distant past, making the monument all the more poignant.

The passenger pigeon monument in Wisconsin was the first public memorial to a species whose population had been reduced to none. In Aldo Leopold’s speech published on the occasion of monument unveiling on May 11, 1947, he characterised the monument as a symbol of sorrow and grief, not only for the bird which was now extinct but also because of the lingering doubt that the extinction had been unnecessary. A bird which had been

ridiculously abundant—numbering in the billions—was extinct in half a century.¹² Leopold was unsure that the monument could have any function other than as a public confession of guilt—a collective guilt that he and his ancestors had thought it “more important to multiply people and comforts than to cherish the beauty of the land in which they live.”¹³ Leopold recognized this grief as something new, noting that the sportsman who shot the last pigeon had not grieved and the sailor who clubbed the last auk did not mourn.¹⁴ The monument was explicitly for remembering this guilt since although there were still living men who as youngsters had seen the birds “but a few decades hence only the oldest oaks will remember, and at long last only the hills will know.”¹⁵ The inscription on the monument would remain and tourists would read it, “but their thoughts, like the bronze pigeon, will have no wings.”¹⁶ He doubted, then, that people’s attitudes would be easy to change. Hartley H. T. Jackson who delivered the dedication address at the unveiling was more positive about the monument’s function for the future: “Let us not look upon this beautiful work of art as a token to the dead and the past, but rather as a symbol to the living and the future that never again will we permit through our ignorance or our indolence a native species to vanish from our midst.”¹⁷

A monument, as a physical remnant, is more than plaques and words—it also sits in a landscape. For Leopold, the monument “perched like a duckhawk on this cliff...will scan this wide valley,” seeing many birds pass by, but alas, no passenger pigeons.¹⁸ But to astute observers today, the monument to a dead bird placed along the effigy monuments of Native Americans is noteworthy. This was a landscape long used to honour and remember the dead. The pigeon monument is a fitting addition to the landscape of memory on the prominent cliff top.

In southern Pennsylvania, only a few months after the Wisconsin dedication, another monument to the passing of the passenger pigeon was set up. This time it was not a group of specialist bird lovers, but a group of boy scouts who took the initiative. In October 1947, the Conewago District Boy Scouts sponsored an eight-foot high stone shaft topped with a bronze passenger pigeon and bearing a granite plaque.¹⁹ According to the plaque, the monument was placed in an area known as Pigeon Hills near Harrisburg, where the passenger pigeon had flocked “from earliest pioneer days until the 1800’s [sic]” and “was once so plentiful its numbers darkened the skies”.²⁰ The monument was destroyed in 1981 and a replacement was relocated to a nearby state park and substantially redesigned so that it is quite close in design to the Wyalusing monument.

Unlike the Wyalusing monument which clearly blamed human greed for the pigeon’s demise, the boy scout monument called the species “ill-fated,” implying it was destined to fall. Although the scouts specifically dedicated the memorial “in the interest of the preservation of wild life,” the reading of this monument is quite different from the other. This monument evokes the sadness of inevitable loss of the pigeon to death, rather than a feeling of guilt for overharvesting the bird. The difference is subtle, but it is there. Both the grief and guilt approaches to the commemoration of the pigeon appear on roadside historical markers in states from Wisconsin to Mississippi.²¹

Figure 14.3 Passenger pigeon memorial in the Cincinnati Zoo, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 2017.
Source: Photograph by author.

Passenger pigeon monuments take on an additional significance in Cincinnati where the last known specimen, a female called Martha, died on September 1, 1914 in the

Cincinnati Zoo.²² For the 70th anniversary of her death and thus the extinction of the species, the zoo made the pavilion in which she had died into a memorial (see Figure 14.3). The Japanese-style pagoda was one of seven aviaries built in 1875 when the zoo first opened and is the only one remaining after a new gorilla exhibit was added, although the building was relocated when it became a museum/memorial.²³ The building featured three taxidermied passenger pigeons on display and wall exhibits detailing the hunting practices that led to the extinction.²⁴ In a sad twist of fate, the last known Carolina parakeet (*Conuropsis carolinensis*), who was called Incas, had also died in the same building in 1918. The original dedication plaque named both birds as the object of the memorial, even though it is placed under a bronze passenger pigeon statue.²⁵

The passenger pigeon has always received more attention than other North American birds which became extinct in the same era, but these too have been monumentalised. The artist Todd McGrain created a series of large scale bronze statues of five extinct North American bird species: great auk (*Pinguinus impennis*, extinct 1844), Labrador duck (*Camptorhynchus labradorius*, extinct 1878), passenger pigeon, Carolina parakeet, and heath hen (*Tympanuchus cupido cupido*, extinct 1832). Individual copies of the statues have been placed into the landscapes relevant to the extinction events for each bird, with species-specific installations in Newfoundland, New York, Florida, Martha's Vineyard, and Ohio (see Figure 14.4). One set of the statues was displayed as a group in 2014-15 in the gardens of the Smithsonian Castle, except for the passenger pigeon which was placed next to the National Museum of Natural History where the body of Martha, the last live passenger pigeon, was put on display to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of her death. I saw this set of statues, their large, smooth black bodies seemingly caught in the act of preening or stretching or squawking in the garden. McGrain models 'these gestural forms to contain a taut equilibrium, a balanced pressure from outside and from inside—like a breath held in'.²⁶ The breath does look to be held in, but it cannot be released from these lifeless figures. They are like giant silhouettes, shadows of things that had been, but were no more.

Figure 14.4 Passenger pigeon bronze from the Lost Birds project in place at the Audubon Center, Columbus, Ohio, June 2017.

Source: Photograph by author.

Unlike heroic soldiers, national founders, intellectual thinkers, or tenacious reformers who often get statues put up in their honour, the birds these statues commemorate did nothing special—except that every last one of their kind died because of humans. These monuments mark the tragedy of a specific extinction as a loss that should be remembered by generations long after those who saw these specific animals. The monuments attempt to make the birds real to us now through image of the species, whether as McGrain's three-dimensional models or the more picture-like plaques of the pigeon monuments. We have to be reminded of what these birds looked like because we cannot see them alive again. These monuments (especially outside of the temporary group setting in which I saw them) tell a directed story about specific species with specific histories. They mark the species' demise but do not necessarily ask the viewer to see the bigger picture of extinction.

Memorials to mass extinction

A partial move from individual species to mass extinction is what we find in the 'Endling' display at the National Museum of Australia (NMA) described at the beginning of this chapter. In both appearance and function, it serves as an extinction memorial, not just to the thylacine, but also to the many named species that cover the walls. The original NMA exhibit that opened in 2001 housing 'Endling' was named 'Tangled Destinies', a space to explore 'how people have responded to the Australian environment over tens of thousands of years and how the environment has responded to them'.²⁷ As the epigraph notes, the European colonisation of Australia has resulted in the extinction of hundreds of species. Many of these species are not iconic like the Tasmanian tiger—in fact, a good number of them listed on the walls did not even have a common name, indicating their obscurity to the general public. The problem is that these names too are obscured: the etching of the names into the metal is hard to read and only the thylacine has a picture or artefacts to catch the eye. As an attempt to lift a species level monument to an event level one, the design is not particularly successful.

The same can be said about the Cincinnati zoo monument. The multi-species nature of the Cincinnati zoo extinction site led to a change of focus when the memorial was redone for the 100-year anniversary of the passenger pigeon extinction in 2014.²⁸ The exhibit inside of the building was renamed 'Martha's Legacy: Lessons from the Passenger Pigeon for a Sustainable Future'. While there was still one wall covering the history of passenger pigeon 'from billions to none' and one case with a pigeon net and stuffed pigeon, the two other long walls now displayed 'A Wake-up Call to Save Wildlife' featuring the American bison, wild turkey, and American alligator, and 'Saving Species: Conservation Champions of the Zoo' with stories of contemporary international wildlife conservation efforts involving the Cincinnati zoo. There are no stories of other extinctions—even though one important one, the Carolina parakeet, happened in that very room. While the pagoda is still labelled on the zoo map as 'Passenger Pigeon Memorial', it has become more of an exhibit to conservation than a monument to extinction.

Figure 14.5 Monument to Extinction. Above: full work; below: two panels close-up, artist Bob Lockhart, Louisville Zoo, Louisville, Kentucky, June 2017.
Source: Photograph by author.

A different aesthetic informs 'Monument to Extinction' at the Louisville zoo (see Figure 14.5). This installation of reddish-brown, mustard yellow, and grey-blue tiles by sculpture Bob Lockhart was dedicated in 1987 and now graces the limestone covered side of the educational building. The work features 45 square ceramic tiles with lost and nearly lost species, from the dodo and great auk to the orangutan and Przewalski horse. Each tile is a close-up portrait of the head of an animal, making the monument a wall of faces. They are charismatic, attracting our gaze, a quality which can be mobilised within environmental conservation governance.²⁹ Their form as portraits also anthropomorphises these nonhumans to an extent, a technique which can be useful for species conservation purposes.³⁰ There is also an issue of scale at work in this monument. The many faces stretch out over the wall. There is a sense of smallness of the viewer as one facing the many extinct and near extinct species.

The smallness of a person in the face of the sixth mass extinction event is even more poignant in the 2012 design for the Mass Extinction Monitoring Observatory (MEMO), a spiralling limestone monument to be set on the edge of a dramatic cliff on the Isle of

Portland, part of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage site in the United Kingdom.³¹ The design featured visitors passing by massive limestone panels, each carved with an extinct species, as they worked their way up the inside of the monument's spiral, which was inspired by a characteristic local fossil the Portland screw.³² The original concept was to have 'images of all the species of plants and animals known to have gone extinct in modern times'.³³ The top would be built to 120 m but remain open so that more panels could be added over time to mark the continuing extinction crisis.³⁴ The project had received significant financial backing and endorsements, including the well-known biologist E. O. Wilson.

MEMO was the brainchild of Sebastian Brooke, a stonemason, who became personally interested in extinction after doing some research on extinct Brazilian fauna for a commission and came across the story of Spix's macaw.³⁵ He was struck by the story and wanted to create a stone project that would bring extinction to the fore, pushing people to ask themselves, 'What are we going to do with this knowledge? Where have we come from? What have we become? Where are we going?' He decided that the Isle of Portland, which has been the source of much of London's limestone building material, would be perfect because it is a World Heritage site and 'records a continuous 180 million years of life'. The monument would be 'cumulative' with its ever-higher spiral to stress the profound nature of the problem.

Indeed, the MEMO design is dramatic and cumulative. The first large scale carving was under construction when I visited Sebastian at the Dorchester stonemason's workshop (see Figure 14.6). It was a Wood's cycad (*Encephalartos woodii*), which is extinct in the wild; all existent specimens are clones from cuttings sent to botanical gardens at the turn of the 1900s. The carving was being made life size – and since this palm-like cycad can get to about 6 meters, it was truly monumental. Brooke labelled it 'Egyptian scale', thinking about the massive stone carvings of ancient Egypt. There is a permanence of the remembering in the choice of stone as the material.

Figure 14.6 Carver at work on a sculpture of a cycad for the Mass Extinction Memorial Observatory (MEMO) project, Dorset Centre for Creative Arts, Dorchester, May 2017.

Source: Photograph by author.

But the monumental cycad is not destined for the MEMO spiral that Brooke had envisioned. Instead, in early 2017, he decided to join forces with The Eden Project (an educational charity in Cornwall that has created massive ecological biomes in an old pit mine) to re-scope the project. He was having difficulties raising the necessary £30 million for the original MEMO design. Together with Eden, the project was changed to take advantage of a soon-to-be-closed underground mine near the original site. Here the walls could be sculpted in directly, reducing the cost considerably. But more fundamentally, the monument would become an experience on 'the values and marvelousness of biodiversity' in addition to extinct species using a 'theatrical mentality'.³⁶ Why the shift from extinction to biodiversity? According to Brooke it was because Eden thought the original idea was 'too gloomy; no one will come'. Although Brooke seemed happy to be moving the project forward when I spoke to him, I could see sadness in his eyes at the loss of his extinction memorial.

A few hours drive away from Dorset in the hills of Sussex, a different type of mass extinction monument of stones sits near the top of Mount Caburn. But here there are no pictures; in fact, there are no names. Extinct species are instead marked with a pile of

unmarked stones, a 'Life Cairn' (see Figure 14.7). Cairns (derived from the Gaelic *càrn*) have been constructed by humans in Europe since the Neolithic era. They are frequently located on hills and contain burials; even if they do not contain human remains, cairns may still have been constructed to honour the dead. The Life Cairn on Mount Caburn was constructed in this tradition. According to Andreas Kornevall, an environmental activist originally from Sweden but living in England, he and a local church pastor Peter Jones dedicated the cairn on May 22, 2011 to honour extinct species as 'a holy place' that would invoke a 'pilgrim feeling' and 'an emotional reaction'.³⁷ In his interview with me, Kornevall stressed that people have the knowledge ('logos') about extinction, but they need the 'poetic feelings and reactions, the mythos' because 'if they only have logos, they only have half the story'.³⁸ The pilgrimage to the Life Cairn is participatory in a way that seeing a pre-constructed monument is not: individuals are invited to lay a stone on the memorial and say a lost species' name. For example, when the last Pinta Island tortoise, George, died in the Galapagos in 2012, Andreas led a group of school kids to the cairn and they each placed a letter they had written about George in the pile with a stone.

Figure 14.7 The Life Cairn on the top of Mount Caburn near Lewes, England, was in a rather dilapidated state, so founder Andreas Kornevall is setting a stake to reclaim the location, May 2017.

Source: Photograph by author.

The Life Cairn has, however, been a place of controversy. It is constructed within the Lewes Downs National Nature Reserve and Natural England who administers the site has said that it is 'absolutely not allowed to have a life cairn' because it conflicts with the heritage values of the existing Middle Iron Age fort ramparts.³⁹ Thus, the stone pile is repeatedly broken down after construction: 'People go there and take away the stone. Others go and put the stones on' in a 'tug of war'.⁴⁰ When I arrived at the Life Cairn, almost nothing was left in the stone pile (see Figure 14.7). The stones that had been on it were nearby, however, so Kornevall and I spent a few minutes gathering some of them to reconstruct a small cairn. He contrasted this ebb and flow with officially sanctioned Life Cairn in Stockholm that he built after this original one in 2012. That one is still standing.

The Life Cairn as monument to extinction is a participatory marker of the nothingness of extinction. Standing in front of the pile of stones can only be meaningful if there is an oral component of reading names or outside knowledge to know what species have been lost. The remembering of the names only happens through ritual. This is intentional: Kornevall believes ceremonies are key because they can 'swing our moral pendulum'.⁴¹

Remembering after none

These monuments are part of the growing wider awareness of ongoing contemporary extinction and attempts to circumvent dystopian futures in which more and more animal species continue to be reduced to zero. While 'absence is the predominant phenomenological feature of extinction', as observed by Audra Mitchell, 'absence does not only erase subjects but also proliferates them'.⁴² There is indeed a proliferation of extinct species in other forms through monumentalisation. The feathered passenger pigeons are replaced by ones in bronze and iron and stone; the thylacine becomes a skeleton in a mausoleum.

Therein lies a potential problem with this response to animal populations reduced to zero. The monuments become testaments to the human power to change environments rather than a mode of respecting the lost. As Rick De Vos notes, extinction narratives ‘are shaped by [the species] absence and their extirpation, by stories of human agency, exploitation and violence rather than those of avian survival and endurance’.⁴³ All of the monuments discussed here mark the end of the species, but none give much space to the vibrant and long-lived nature of the species before the end event. Yet if a critique of regular extinction stories is that they establish ‘spatial and temporal distance—a gap that shields the narratee [us] from the extinct animal and the act of killing’, as levelled by De Vos,⁴⁴ these monuments close the gap. They stress the ‘avarice and thoughtless of man’ (Wyalusing monument), ‘the current rate of extinction’ (Endling), and the ‘mythos’ of laying a stone (Life Cairn). The monuments do not shy away from laying blame on the viewer.

Because memorials may say more about the people who set them up than the events they commemorate, what does it say about modern society that memorials to extinction are appearing in more and more places? I think there are two answers to this question. One is that modern society is struggling with the entanglement of remembering and forgetting. Those who set up monuments are afraid that the honoree or event will be forgotten in the future, or is already being forgotten by most in the present. The memorial makers want people to remember the acts that brought about a species’ end, as well as the value and beauty of the species itself. But these remembrances are too late for the species in question—it is gone. The monument’s only value is from either prompting new conservation actions in the world today (to avoid future similar ends) or a purely spiritual or aesthetic appreciation for nature-now-gone. The second of these values is easier to achieve than the first because it requires remembering what was in the past but forgetting why it is no longer in the present.

The other answer is that memorials to extinction reveal a weakening of human exceptionalism and move toward a post-human perspective over the last 70 years.⁴⁵ The oldest passenger pigeon memorials were set up at the same times as monuments to the soldiers of WWII.⁴⁶ These birds were also casualties of war, although it was a war on nature, and were understood at the time as worthy as objects of grief. The species was lost, gone from the landscape, and that was worth an expression of sorrow. The Endling display also reveals an attentiveness to the individual within the extinction event, something which affirms the relationality of multispecies communities.⁴⁷ The individual bodies laid out in the exhibit, even if they are not the last endling, make the thylacine personal and specific. The original MEMO design and Life Cairn ask the viewer to recognise the multitude of non-humans in the world as having inherent value. Extinction monuments reveal an awareness of human-nonhuman entanglement and the wish to engage with it.

Standing in front of the shiny box in the National Museum of Australia, I see perhaps a fitting end for the thylacine. An end with meaning. There is nothing to be done about the thylacine now, but the thylacine deaths need not have been in vain.⁴⁸ This is an end that encourages the viewer to not let the same thing happen again. The names on the walls cry out asking for us to stop adding their living relatives. The monument evokes mourning, but at the same time is a celebration of life. As Ursula Heise points out, there are limitations to the elegy as genre for trying to avoid extinction,⁴⁹ so thinking beyond the dead to the still living matters. After there are none, there is not nothing left—there is still a chance to remember, to honour, to grieve, to commemorate, to act.

Notes

¹ The fieldwork necessary for this article was generously supported by the Birgit och Gad Rausing's Stiftelse för Humanistisk Forskning which funded the author's project 'Monuments to extinction'.

² Mike Smith, interview with author, Canberra, 16 February 2016. See a full discussion of this exhibit's history and social repercussions in Dolly Jørgensen, "Endling, The Power of the Last in an Extinction-Prone World," *Environmental Philosophy* 14, no. 1: 119-138.

³ James E. Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory," *Harvard Design Magazine* no. 9 <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/9/memory-and-counter-memory>

⁴ American Historical Association, 'Historians on the Confederate Monument Debate', www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/everything-has-a-history/historians-on-the-confederate-monument-debate.

⁵ Robert Musil, "Monuments," in *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Burton Pike (New York: Continuum, 1985), 320-323.

⁶ For the commemoration of animals who fought in armed conflicts, see Hilda Kean, "Animals and War Memorials: Different Approaches to Commemorating the Human-Animal Relationship," in Ryan Hediger, ed., *Animals and War: Studies of Europe and North America* (Brill, 2013); Steven Johnston, "Animals in War: Commemoration, Patriotism, Death," *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2012): 359-371; Sandra Swart, "Horses in the South African War, c. 1899-1902," *Society & Animals* 18, no. 4 (2010): 348-366.

⁷ Deborah Bird Rose and Thom van Dooren, "Encountering a more-than-human world: ethos and the arts of witness," in Urusla Heise, Jon Christensen, and Mchelle Niemann, eds., *Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁸ Thom van Dooren, "Care," *Environmental Humanities* 5 (2014): 291-294; Thom van Dooren, "Mourning crows: grief and extinction in a shared world," in G. Marcin and S. McHugh, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁹ See Alon Confino, "Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method," *American Historical Review* (1997): 1386-1412 and Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the emergence of memory in historical discourse," *Representations* 69 (2000): 127-150 for overviews of this scholarship.

¹⁰ Mark Barrow, *Nature's Ghosts: Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology* (University of Chicago Press, 2009); Ryan Tucker Jones, *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific's Beasts of the Sea, 1741-1867* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹¹ Ceballos, G., P. R. Ehrlich, and R. Dirzo., "Biological annihilation via the ongoing sixth mass extinction signalled by vertebrate population losses and declines," *PNAS* 114 (2017): E6089-E6096

¹² There are several recent books on the passenger pigeon extinction history including Mark Avery, *A Message from Martha: The Extinction of the Passenger Pigeon and Its Relevance Today* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014); Errol Fuller, *The Passenger Pigeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); and Joel Greenberg, *A Feathered River Across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

¹³ Aldo Leopold, "On a Monument to the Pigeon," in Walter E. Scott, ed., *Silent Wings: A Memorial to the Passenger Pigeon* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, 1947), 4.

¹⁴ Leopold, "On a Monument to the Pigeon," 3.

¹⁵ Leopold, "On a Monument to the Pigeon," 3.

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- ¹⁶ Leopold, "On a Monument to the Pigeon," 4.
- ¹⁷ Hartley H. T. Jackson, "Attitude in Conservation," Walter E. Scott, ed., *Silent Wings: A Memorial to the Passenger Pigeon* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, 1947) 24.
- ¹⁸ Leopold, "On a Monument to the Pigeon," 4.
- ¹⁹ "Passenger Pigeon Memorial Site," *Gettysburg Times*, October 8, 1947.
- ²⁰ I have seen photographs of the current monument and have read the text on plaque from those photographs: <http://allenbrowne.blogspot.no/2012/02/pigeon-monument.html>.
- ²¹ See the Historical Marker Database for examples: www.hmdb.org
- ²² R. W. Shufeldt, "Anatomical and other notes on the passenger pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorum*) lately living in the Cincinnati Zoological Gardens," *The Auk* 32, no 1 (1915): 29-41.
- ²³ Associated Press, "Once the most abundant bird in the world, the passenger pigeon is gone," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, January 14, 1975; Joy W. Kraft, *The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 24.
- ²⁴ I have seen only a couple of photographs prior to the 2014 renovation of the exhibit: Joel Greenberg, 'A Trip to the Holy Land, Part II, Picketon and Cincinnati', <https://web.archive.org/web/20100506012422/www.birdzilla.com/blog/2010/04/17/a-trip-to-the-holy-land-part-ii-picketon-and-cincinnati/> and Roadside America, 'Martha - Passenger Pigeon Memorial Hut', www.roadsideamerica.com/story/10663.
- ²⁵ The plaque incorrectly named the Carolina Parakeet as "Inca".
- ²⁶ Todd McGrain, "Memorials," <http://www.toddmcgrain.com/memorials/>
- ²⁷ National Museum of Australia, "*Tangled Destinies: Land and People in Australia*," archived website <https://web.archive.org/web/20010620050636/http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/tangled.htm>
- ²⁸ I visited the site in May 2017. Descriptions come from that visit.
- ²⁹ Jamie Lorimer, "Nonhuman charisma," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007): 911-932.
- ³⁰ M. Root-Bernstein, L. Douglas, A. Smith, and D. Veríssimo, "Anthropomorphized species as tools for conservation: utility beyond prosocial, intelligent and suffering species," *Biodiversity and Conservation* 8 (2013): 1577-1589.
- ³¹ MEMO project brochure, 2012. Archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20121228204516/http://www.memoproject.org/docs/MEMO_brochure.pdf The architecture firm Adjaye Associates had created the memorial's design.
- ³² MEMO project website, 2012. Archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20121228204516/http://www.memoproject.org/>
- ³³ MEMO project website, 2009. Archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20090704081752/http://memoproject.org:80/>
- ³⁴ The design is shown in the MEMO project brochure from 2012.
- ³⁵ Sebastian Brooke, interview with author, 10 May 2017, Dorchester and Isle of Portland. Quotes in this paragraph are from that interview.
- ³⁶ Sebastian Brooke, interview with author, 10 May 2017.
- ³⁷ Andreas Kornevall, interview with author, 12 May 2017, Glynde, UK.
- ³⁸ Kornevall, interview with author.
- ³⁹ Kornevall, interview with author.
- ⁴⁰ Kornevall, interview with author.

⁴¹ Keith Parkins, "The Life Cairn: A memorial for Extinct Species," *Life on a Dark Mountain*, <https://medium.com/dark-mountain/the-life-cairn-1483610d05ab>

⁴² Audra Mitchell, "Beyond Biodiversity and Species: Problematizing Extinction," *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, no. 5 (2016). 23–42.

⁴³ Rick De Vos, "Provocations from the Field – Extinction, Encountering and the Exigencies of Forgetting," *Animal Studies Journal* 6, no. 1 (2017): 1-11, 4.

⁴⁴ De Vos, "Provocations from the Field," 8.

⁴⁵ See Mike Smith, "Ecological Community, the Sense of the World, and Senseless Extinction," *Environmental Humanities* 2 (2013): 21-41 for a discussion of these problems for the question of extinction.

⁴⁶ The effort to construct the first statue to honour WWII soldiers from the US was started in 1947 to honour the veterans of Iwo Jima, a statue which was dedicated in 1954 as the Marine Corps War Memorial. See National Park Service, "World War II Memorials in the National Park Service" <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/worldwarii/memory.htm> and "History of the Marine Corps War Memorial," <https://www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/historyculture/usmcwarmemorial.htm>

⁴⁷ Thom van Dooren, "Pain of Extinction: The Death of a Vulture," *Cultural Studies Review* 16, no. 2 (2010): 271-289.

⁴⁸ There have been and still are ongoing attempts to reconstruct thylacine DNA in the hopes that it can be genetically reengineered through deextinction techniques and exist again. See Stephanie S. Turner, "Open-Ended Stories. Extinction Narratives in Genome Time," *Literature and Medicine* 26, no. 1 (2007): 55-82; Amy Lynn Fletcher, "Bring 'Em Back Alive: Taking the Tasmanian Tiger Cloning Project," *Technology in Society* 30 (2008): 184-201

⁴⁹ Ursula K. Heise, *Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), Chapter 2.