

**Centre for Critical Heritage Studies
Small Grants Scheme
Final Report**

Project: Ecology, Crisis & Symbolism

Applicant(s): Sophie Page, UCL & Lucie Orta, UAL

Award: £2000.00

Project dates: 1/12/2020 to 31/3/2021

Summary: (200-250 words):

Our project employed creative practice and history to encourage young people to look at their relationship with the natural world through a new lens and create their own stories about what we have lost and what we risk losing. Drawing and making masks are a method and medium to help restore proximity with nature, to imagine new playful species, and open up new narratives to overcome fear and crisis. Sophie Page and Lucy Orta co-designed and produced The Lost Species Mask Kit, which contained pattern templates of mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects that were once abundant in Britain, alongside a selection of animals that were important in medieval lives and culture. It is accompanied by The Lost Species Handbook (see <https://www.studio-orta.com/en/books>), an illustrated guide to 38 endangered, extinct, everyday and extraordinary animals that provides insights into UK species loss and the cultural meanings of animals that are disappearing from our collective imagination.

Images of project: please see the Lost Species Handbook (above link and p.34 for East London places of significance) and an image of the cover of the mask making kit and one of the illustrations here <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/critical-heritage-studies/small-grants> and below. Due to covid lockdowns student participants made their masks at home and uploaded photographs of their project portfolios to a private padlet.

Details of achievements against objectives:

For objectives please see summary.

We initially budgeted for 50 student participants. We were able to offer the April workshop to a larger number, partly due to getting more funding and partly because we had to move activities online and were therefore able to offer the workshop to schools beyond as well as in East London. In the end 95 students signed up to the workshop and 67 attended and completed.

The history department awarded funding for Amita Murray to give a linked creative writing session to students so that their mask making activity would be accompanied by a manifesto they had written themselves about the climate crisis.

Feedback was extremely positive. Here is an example from a teacher (Michelle is at the London College of Fashion and was one of the workshop leaders)

Hi Michelle, just wanted to say thank you again for the CPD session. It was great to see the work of the students that took part in the Insights programme. I was especially pleased to see Ketsia's manifesto, it was powerful and eloquent. Ketsia has expressed before she lacks confidence in expressing herself and speaking, so I wanted to share that I thought this example demonstrated the impact of Insights in enabling her to address this. This year's first year cohort are the most diverse that I have seen at the college and the theme of 'lack of confidence' has been expressed by quite a few.

Feedback from Student participants (from a questionnaire designed by the London School of Fashion for the project)
Q12 Has this project made you feel more empowered to speak out about climate/species emergencies. Why?

1 out of 23 responses did not agree

1. Yes this project has because I was inspired by the other students projects and how they portrayed animals issues.
2. It actually has as yet again some of these things I wasn't really aware of.
3. It opened my eyes to the history around animals and how we should help them. In my future pieces, I want to share a light on the earth and the animals being close to extinction.
4. It was something I was already interested in but has provided me with more knowledge.
5. The project highlighted the different problem and how we as students can take action even in our projects.
6. Yes, it has empowered me and inspired me to show and speak about the climate and species emergencies.
7. I don't really use animals in my work but now I do.
8. Climate change effects everyone on this earth and we have all the responsibility to look after it, after looking in deeper to this it has made me more aware and taking more actions to change habits.
9. Love safe world by using less plastic.
10. Yes, because I felt like it made me feel like I need to shop more sustainably.
11. Not necessarily, I've been interested in environmentalism for quite a while, to begin with. Murray Bookchin is an inspiration, I love his works, he empowers me to speak out about climate and species emergencies.
12. Yes, it has, cause it has shown me that animals life is just as important as mine.
13. I am now more aware on the threat of endangered animals and who those animals are.
14. Not much, as my main focus was on humanoid animals and mythological species.
15. I was already really invested in this topic and I care a lot about the climate and animals but I loved the opportunity to communicate how I feel through my work and through art and fashion.
16. It hasn't made me want to speak about it more however now I'm more aware of them.
17. Yes, because it is important that we protect all endangered species and work towards building them a safe habitat.
18. Yes, definitely because species deserve to have a voice.
19. It has made me aware of the current problems around the world whether it being environmental or political.
20. Yes, as days go on climate change is still a very big issue and I'm hoping we can all make change happen.
21. The project has made me more aware of the climate/ species emergencies because to be honest I wouldn't really focus in animals in my textiles pieces and focusing in animals in this project has really inspired me to make pieces that I would not do for example the mask to show a certain animal and there meaning towards me.
22. Yes it has made me more aware of how many species are endangered.
23. Yes, because we need to start making changes to the world.

Future dissemination plans:

The mask-making activity is being offered to colleges across East London and some Museums and public galleries (eg Whitechapel and Yorkshire Sculpture Park. This is something we are still exploring.

We would like to publish the Lost Species Handbook in printed format are currently looking for a suitable publisher.

Lucy Orta and I are considering a plan to develop a Lost Species Handbook linked to Italian animals

Any income from other sources:

Please see budget below for contributions from¹:
University of the Arts London Knowledge Exchange Impact Fund
University Insights Spring School
History Department, UCL



These photos were taken for Studio Orta and I need to give them advance warning before any online publication.

¹

Budget details removed on [Successful Awards 2020-21](#)

see honey and wax was
tain. Honeybees were
rives (known as skeps)
p them dry. Beekeepers,
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**HUMAN PROXIMITY
TO HONEYBEES AND
OBSERVATION OF THEIR
COMPLEX SOCIAL
ORGANISATIONS
ENCOURAGED RESPECT
AND INTEREST IN
THEIR LIVES.**



have given into a vice such as greed, pride or anger.

chambers and tunnels underground).
One badger is said to lie down at the
entrance to the hole with a stick in
its mouth while others piled earth on
its belly. Next two badgers take hold
of the ends of the stick to pull the
badger and the loosed earth away
from their new home. Although
somewhat in detail, this story does
reflect the effort and collaboration
needed to construct a sett, which can
take many years to complete and may be passed
down to generations of badgers over more than a century.

Some medieval nobles kept them as unusual pets, but
badgers suffer stress in captivity and engage in destructive
digging. A more positive image of the badger as a companion
animal is found in the story of Saint Ciaran of Ireland. Authors
of saints' biographies (called hagiographers) often suggested



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THREATENED SPECIES

's wildlife is disappearing: it is estimated that 165 of its species
scally endangered and it is now considered one of the most nature-
countries in the world.

arious factors account for the decline in species, but the main
is habitat destruction due to modern agricultural practices,
illy the use of fertilizers and agrochemical products, and increased
dioxide emissions. Farmland now accounts for over 70% of the UK's
ea. This land includes the meadows, woodlands, hedges and ponds
any of the species live that are listed on *International Union for
vitation of Nature's Red List* as either endangered (EN), critically
ered (CR), or vulnerable to extinction (VU). This means that the
ch of farmers to land use is extremely important, along with the
ts to species decline: urbanisation, deforestation, pollution and
imate change.

The Earth's biological resources are vital to humanity's economic
tal development. They form the web of life to which we also belong
on which we so fully depend. At the United Nations Conference
nvironment and Development (UNCED) at Rio in 1992, the UK made
ntment to halt loss of biodiversity by signing the Convention of
al Diversity, an action designed to ensure that we leave a healthy
ble world for future generations. Since 1994 protection plans have
at in place to conserve the most vulnerable species and those at risk
ction across Britain but these are only having partial success. All of
contribute to healthy local and national ecosystems, with a range of
t, and by educating ourselves and others.

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THREATENED SPECIES

- RED SQUIRREL
- WATER VOLE
- PINE MARTEN
- HAZEL DORMOUSE
- HEDGEHOG
- NATTERJACK TOAD
- WHITE CLAW CRAYFISH
- TURTLE DOVE
- GREATER MOUSE-EARED BAT
- GREAT YELLOW BUMBLEBEE

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RED SQUIRREL EN

The red squirrel was once abundant across England, estimated that all its populations will become extinct in the next 20-50 years unless more is done to protect it.

Red squirrels have become endangered due to invasive non-native grey squirrels that arrived from America in the early 20th century. The grey adapted changing habitats and transmits the deadly squirrel pox to the red squirrel. Maintaining populations of red is extremely difficult. The primary conservation strategy has been to identify the forests in which they thrive, be trapped and forcibly remove grey squirrels from these sites.

WATER VOLE EN

Millions of water voles once lived close to rivers and streams in England, Scotland and Wales, but the species diminished by at least 90% in the last century and continues to decline. The main reason for their disappearance is the predatory American mink, which escaped from fur-farms and was released by activists in the early 1980s. Habitat loss due to intensive farming, the canalisation of rivers and water courses and water pollution have also had a major role in their decline as well as fluctuating water levels caused by climate change.

Sadly, water voles can also be mistaken for and killed accidentally. Water voles are important to the health of rivers because of their role in the food chain. They disperse and forage in river banks, creating habitats that benefit diverse small mammals, insects, birds and fish. Conservation efforts have shown that educating anglers and restoring their natural habitats along rivers and streams are effective ways to protect the species.

PINE MARTEN CR

The pine marten plays an active part in woodland ecosystems, eating berries, fungi and small birds and mammals. It is a more aggressive grey squirrel, which damages and kills trees by stripping their bark. Hunting pine martens for sport and trapping them for fur throughout the 19th and 20th centuries led to their decline.

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HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust
Bat Conservation Trust
British Hedgehog Preservation Society
British Trust for Ornithology
Bumfladder Conservation Trust
Forestry England
Hedgehog Street

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EXTRAORDINARY MEDIEVAL CREATURES

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EXTRAORDINARY MEDIEVAL CREATURES



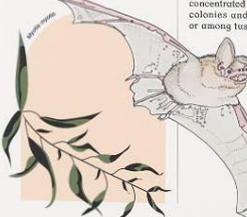
is the rabbit's revenge. They are depicted catching and tying up a dog, trying him in court and finally executing him for his crimes against robbildom.

SPARROWHAWK

Hunting with birds was popular with the medieval nobility and inspired many how-to guides. One surviving treatise that was written for a wealthy girl living in Paris in the late fourteenth century explains how to raise and train a sparrowhawk. Our trainee hawkler is advised to take fledglings from nests in late May or June and place them in a strong artificial nest warmed by sunlight or a fire. Fledgling care involved frequent feeding and keeping them clean and free from harm and stress. Her goal is not only to

structures. The frequency with which doves bred meant that they provided a year-round source of protein and a rich fertiliser for elite gardens.

The thirteenth-century English encyclopaedist Bartholomew watched sitting doves moving their neck in all directions as if they were attentively observing the world. But, he reflects sadly, this doesn't stop them being easily brought down by arrows when they fly from their perches. Bartholomew admires how in Egypt and Syria doves carried messages from province to province but, loving their homes, always came back. Like modern pigeons, medieval doves had a diverse array of colours. These gained religious significance: sapphire wings represented the sky and a peaceful soul, silvery feathers signalled a good reputation, and gold colouring suggested a pure mind. But when the colour of the dove resembled that of a turbulent sea, this symbolised an agitated mind: distressed, confused and in conflict with itself.



concentrated in colonies and 1 or among trees

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EAGLE

The white-tailed or sea eagle is a powerful predator of fish, birds, rabbits and hares and an opportunistic scavenger attracted to human settlements. Once very common in Britain, this eagle dramatically declined in the Late Middle Ages and was extinct by 1800; Britain's other native species of eagle, the golden eagle, survived. Its dwindling numbers are thought to have been caused by the loss and degradation of wetlands in Britain and perhaps by more intensive marine fishing that reduced its food supply. Even limited human activities affected eagle populations because they need huge territories, do not breed until they are five or six years old and have low breeding success. In 2019 and 2020, however, pairs of white-tailed eagles were successfully reintroduced on the Isle of Wight.

The skill of the white-tailed eagle in spotting, diving towards and seizing fish is illustrated in many surviving medieval British manuscripts. Sometimes this eagle represents Christ, who comes from heaven to catch souls just as the eagle catches fish. At other times the eagle symbolises an earthly ruler, noble and powerful. This positive symbolism may explain why there were some medieval laws protecting eagles from hunting by poachers.



SOMETIMES THIS EAGLE REPRESENTS CHRIST, WHO COMES FROM HEAVEN TO CATCH SOULS JUST AS THE EAGLE CATCHES FISH. AT OTHER TIMES THE EAGLE SYMBOLISES AN EARTHLY RULER, NOBLE AND POWERFUL.

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EXTINCT SPECIES

These animals all become extinct or threatened in Medieval Britain for reasons that are unapologetically familiar: habitat loss, persecution and competition with introduced species. Some medieval texts reflect a sense of great loss at their disappearance. Common cranes and white-tailed eagles have been successfully reintroduced into the UK and wild boar have escaped to form new communities in the wild. Larger and fiercer animals – the wolf, lynx and bear – are more controversial candidates for reintroduction.



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PLACES OF SIGNIFICANCE

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BIOGRAPHIES

Lucy Orta

Lucy is a visual artist with an interest in socially engaged creative practices that address key social and ecological challenges. She is Chair of Art and the Environment at the University of the Arts London (UAL) and is a

HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

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THE STORY OF YVAIN AND THE LION IS TYPICAL OF A CERTAIN NOSTALGIA IN MEDIEVAL CULTURE.

twelfth century poem by Marie de France in which a wolf form after he reveals his secret wife, she treacherously hides his cloth back into a woman and is forced to hit, then marries another man. One day the king's hunting dogs and sees the lion he cannot speak to beg for mercy and his nobility and gentleness. Once he'd violently attacks his former wife and h