

# Naming Extinction

Cultural heritage institutions as agents  
of environmental citizenship

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How to Write About a Vanishing World | The New Yorker

THE  
NEW YORKER

## HOW TO WRITE ABOUT A VANISHING WORLD

*Scientists chronicling ecological destruction must confront the loss of their life's work and our planet's riches.*

By Elizabeth Kolbert



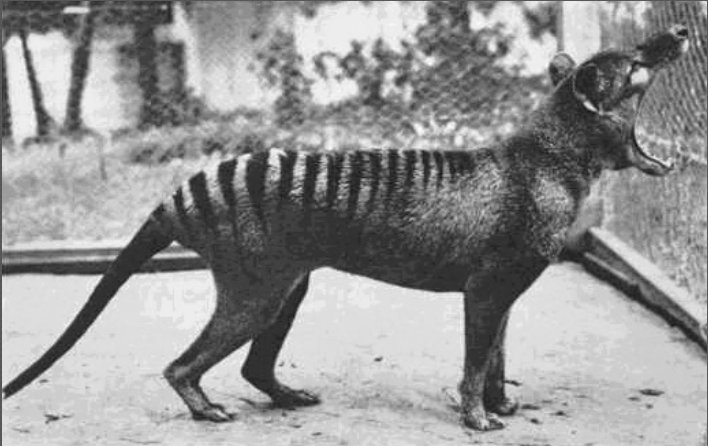
*Scientists narrate the demise of ecosystems they've spent lifetimes studying.* Illustration by Emiliano Ponzì

On a stormy night in 1987, an American herpetologist named Marty Crump was getting ready for bed when she heard a tapping at her door. This was in the mountains of northwest Costa Rica, where evening callers were rare. The visitor had braved the downpour to give Crump what counted, in field-biology circles, as a hot tip: the golden toads had emerged.

Golden toads had been formally described only two decades earlier, by another American herpetologist, named Jay Savage. In the paper Savage had written assigning the species its Latin name—*Bufo periglenes*—he noted that the toads exhibited “the most startling coloration.”

“I must confess that my initial response when I saw them was one of disbelief,” he wrote in an otherwise staid scientific tract. He wondered briefly whether someone had tricked him by dipping “the examples in enamel paint.”

# Lost species



# Naming

## EXTINCTION AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS

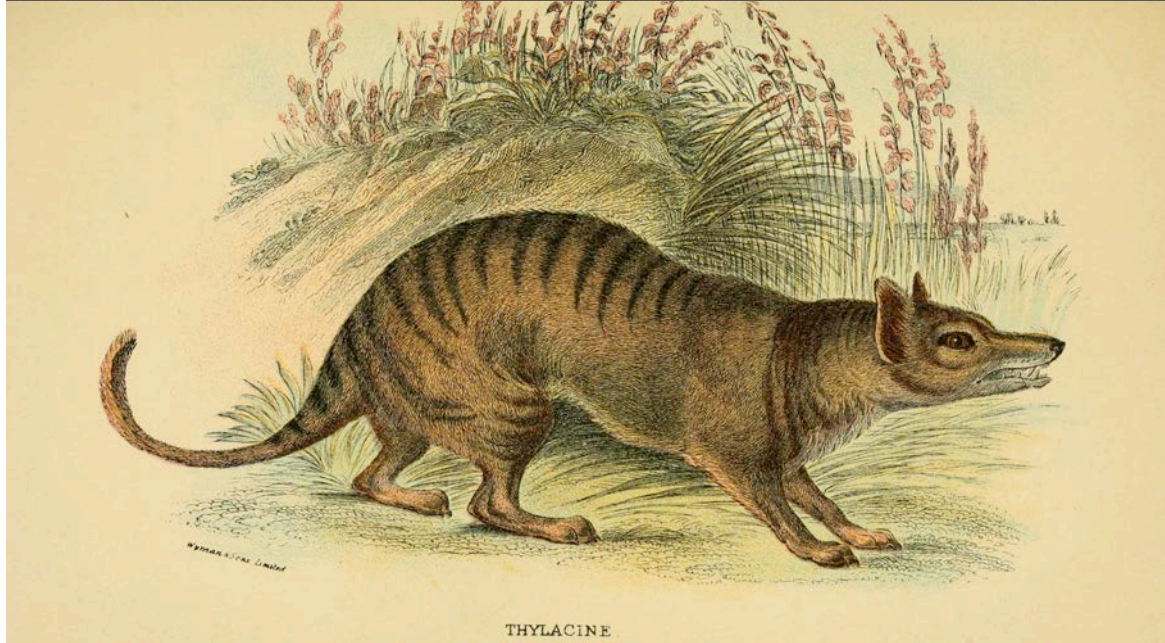
NOT SINCE THE END OF THE AGE OF DINOSAURS — THE GREAT EXTINCTION AT THE END OF THE MESOZOIC ERA — HAVE SPECIES DISAPPEARED AT SUCH A RAPID RATE.

As ecosystems recover after episodes of mass extinction, evolution eventually produces new species. But evolutionary recovery can begin only when the cause of mass extinction itself goes away, and the recovery process takes millions of years. Not until humanity realizes the effect that our massive transformation of the biosphere is having on the world's species, and not until we decide to take corrective action, will there be any hope of stemming the tide of the Sixth Extinction and allowing biodiversity to recover.

This is a list of all the species extinctions that have been recorded since the 1500s. Extinction can be documented only for species known to have existed in the first place — and only when an observer has noted their passing. Because at

# Environmental citizenship

- Conditions and consequences of the active participation of citizens in local and global environmental challenges
- Environmentally aware actions (public or private) driven by a belief in justice and co-creation of sustainable politics
- Recognising value of livable environments, promoting conservation of resources, and supporting nature protection and biodiversity



Endling

Thylacine in Richard Lydekker, *A hand-book to the marsupialia and monotremata* (1896)

## NMA exhibit

- National Museum of Australia, Canberra
- Tangled Destinies gallery



# Endling

Unless the hand of man be stayed

from their destruction ... the  
Echidna, the Emu [sic] and  
the Megapodius ... will shortly  
exist only in the pages of the  
naturalist.

George Bennett, 1866

## Endling The last of a species

As Europeans colonised Australia, native species began to vanish. Some were hunted for food or fun, or because they were considered a threat to livestock. Others lost their habitats as land was cleared or newly introduced animals and plants pushed them out.

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.







## Thylacine

The thylacine (*Thylacine cynocephalus*) was a large carnivorous marsupial that lived in Tasmania's eucalypt forests and coastal heathlands. Settlers dubbed it the "Tasmanian tiger" because it had dark stripes along the sandy-yellow fur on its back.

Sty and with a stiff gait, thylacines hunted at night. They mostly ate bandicoots, possums and other marsupials, rodents and small birds.



From *Illustrations of the Fauna of Tasmania*, 1830. Reproduced by permission of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.



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## The Last Wild

... the thylacine ... the last wild ...

The thylacine was the last of its kind ...



# Endling (n) the last surviving individual of a species of animal or plant.

**Not just a Tassie tiger**

There are many other species of animals and plants that are now extinct. Some of these are listed on the wall. They are all animals and plants that have disappeared from the earth. Some of them were once very common, but they are no longer seen. They are all animals and plants that have disappeared from the earth. Some of them were once very common, but they are no longer seen.



**Extinct**

Extinct means that a species of animal or plant has disappeared from the earth. It is no longer seen. Some of the animals and plants that are extinct are listed on the wall. They are all animals and plants that have disappeared from the earth. Some of them were once very common, but they are no longer seen.





Phillip Adams

# Balletlab

In association with DANCEHOUSE



## Self-Encasing Trilogy #1: Endling

Dancehouse 150 Princes Street North Carlton  
Wed 12<sup>th</sup> to Sat 15<sup>th</sup> June at 8pm  
Sun 16<sup>th</sup> June 5pm  
All Tickets \$10  
Bookings 9347 2860

Tasmanian Sound Screen Archives

Myer Foundation

DANCEHOUSE

Bookings 9347 2860



ARTS  
VICTORIA

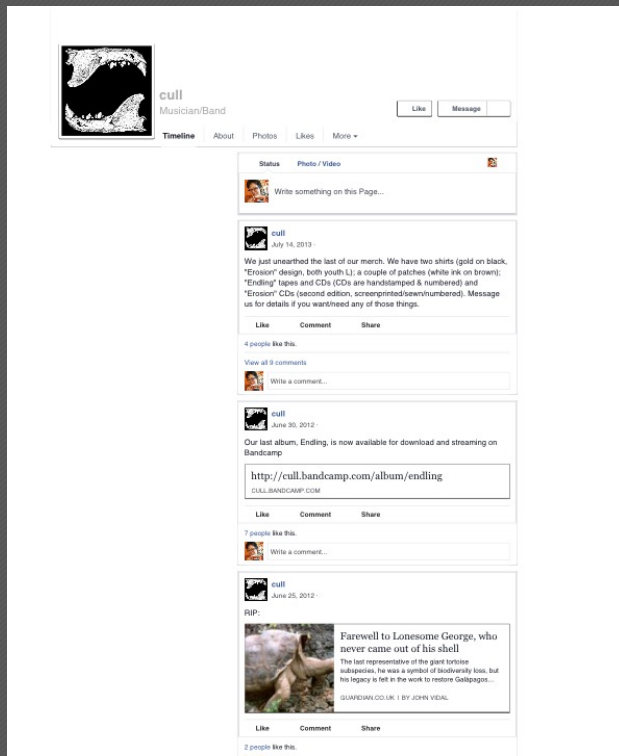
VICTORIA  
THE GREAT STATE



# Andrew Schultz, Endling, Op. 72

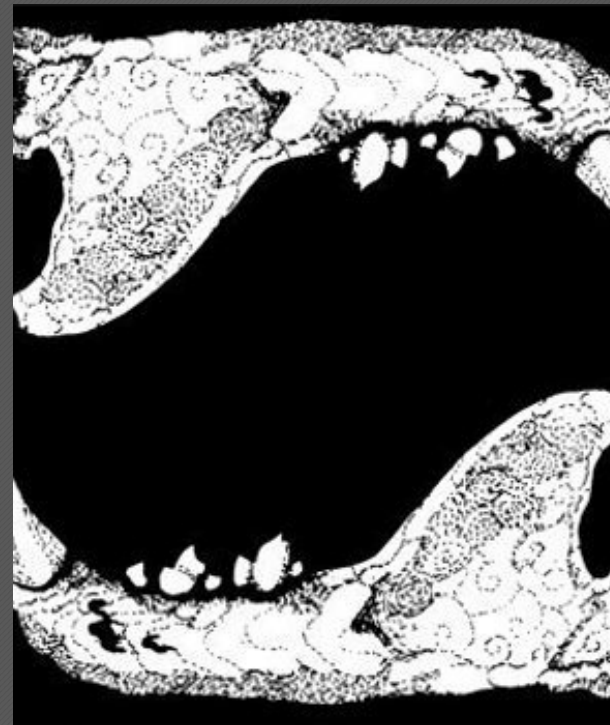


# Cull, *Ending*



The screenshot shows the Facebook profile for the band 'cull'. The profile picture is a black and white image of a skull. The page name is 'cull' with the subtitle 'Musician/Band'. There are buttons for 'Like' and 'Message'. The main content area shows a timeline of posts:

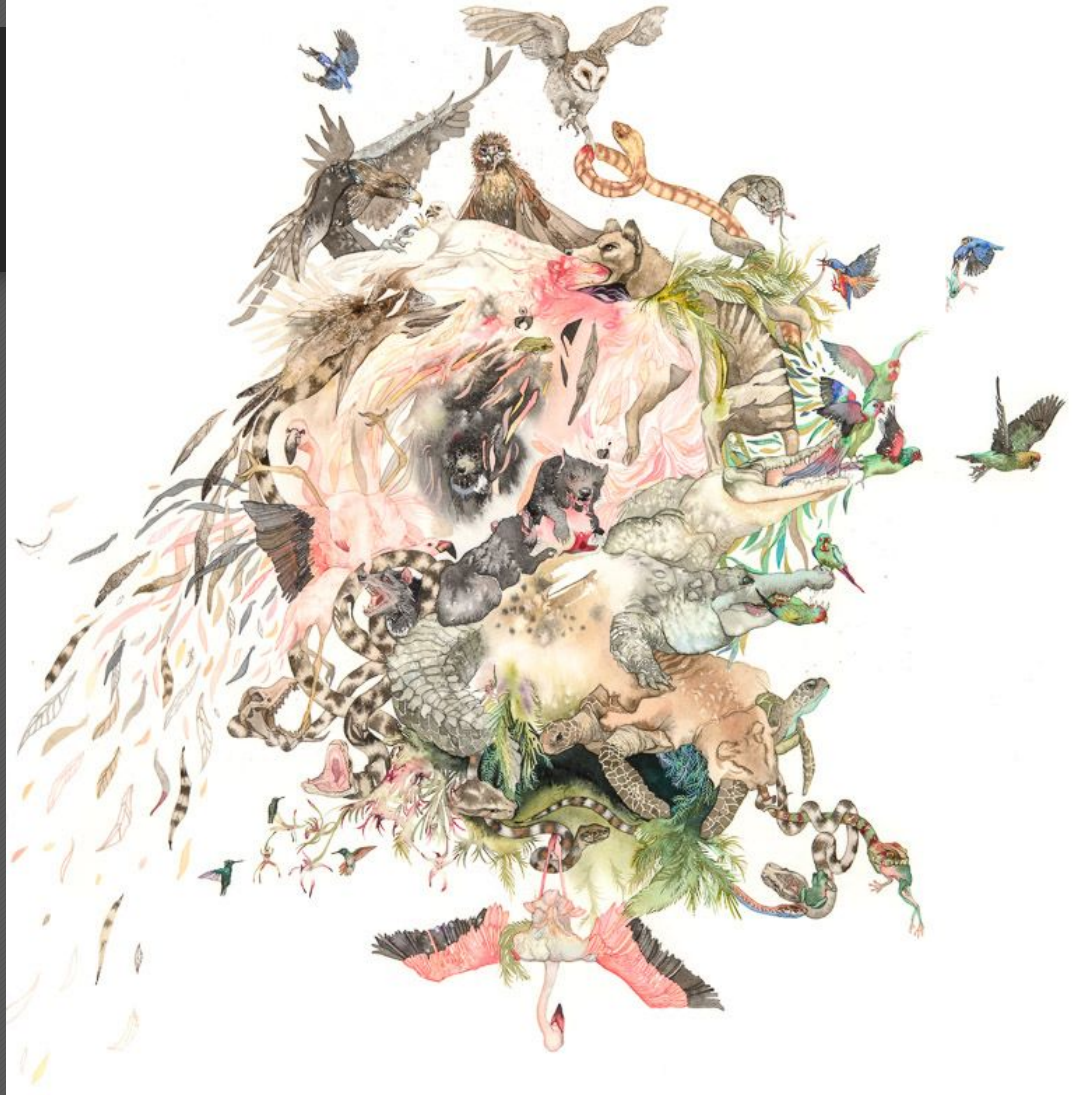
- A post from July 14, 2013, with the text: "We just unearthed the last of our march. We have two shirts (gold on black, 'Erosion' design, both youth L), a couple of patches (white ink on brown), 'Ending' tapes and CDs (CDs are handstamped & numbered) and 'Erosion' CDs (second edition, screenprinted/sewn/numbered). Message us for details if you want/need any of those things." It has 4 likes and 9 comments.
- A post from June 30, 2012, with the text: "Our last album, *Ending*, is now available for download and streaming on Bandcamp." It includes a link to <http://cull.bandcamp.com/album/ending> and has 7 likes.
- A post from June 25, 2012, with the text: "RIP: Farewell to Lonesome George, who never came out of his shell. The last representative of the giant tortoise subspecies. He was a symbol of biodiversity loss, but his legacy is felt in the work to restore Galapagos." It includes a small image of a tortoise and has 7 likes.





Laura Ball,  
Endling Series

*Benjamin*  
(2012)



# Paula Taaffe, *The Endling* (2015)



## The Endling | Paula Taaffe

Opening Saturday November 28, 2015.  
**Hastings City Art Gallery, Hawkes Bay.**

Endling is a term used for the last of a species or subspecies. Featuring a cast of handmade creatures, this low-fi, stop motion animation is part poem, part call to action, highlighting a most dire and immediate issue for us all – extinction of endangered species.

Date/Time	Location
Date(s) - 28/11/2015	<b>Hastings City Art Gallery</b>

# Power in words

- Endling named a thing
- People do read the labels!
- Emotional connections to the idea through the word

# Environmental citizenship thru extinction?

- Narrative in a museum -> narrative in art -> new discourse of extinction
- Recognition of a problem through naming
- Increased environmental awareness (citizenship prerequisite)
- Artists being environmental citizens through their activities of art-making

# Environmental citizenship as a humanities role!

- Extinction - the condition of the end of a species
- Memory - the historical position of that extinction
- Remembrance - the acts of making that memory manifest
- Emotions - the feelings that are activated in the remembrance

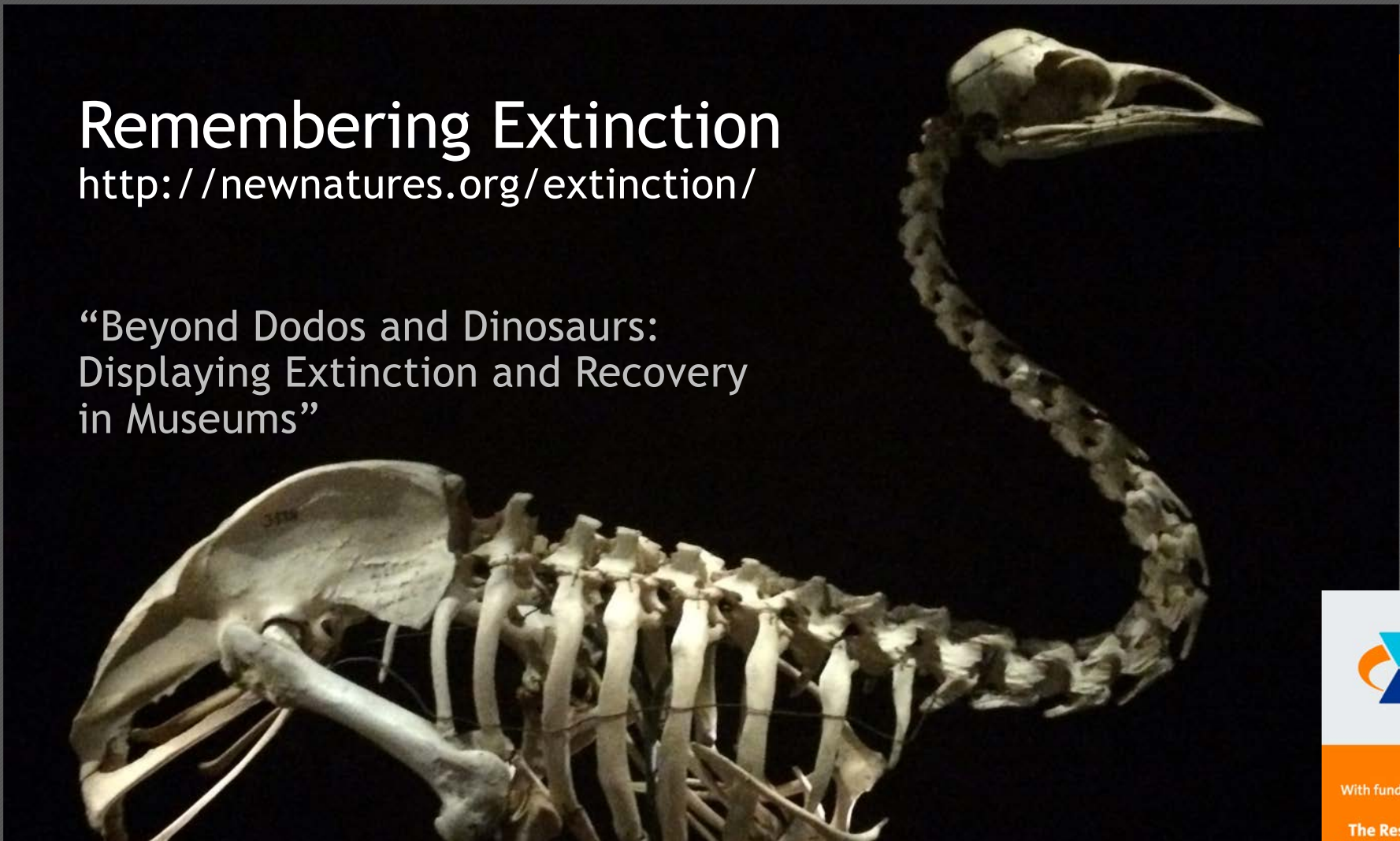
Natural  
sciences

Environmental  
humanities &  
arts

# Remembering Extinction

<http://newnatures.org/extinction/>

“Beyond Dodos and Dinosaurs:  
Displaying Extinction and Recovery  
in Museums”



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