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Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in a Time of Extinction

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Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in a Time of Extinction

Posted on December 1, 2002 by Editor

By Ed Alkaslassy <alkaslae@pacificu.edu>


Humans have caused and are causing the permanent extinction of many unique living beings such as the Dodo (a pigeon-like bird). A disproportionate number of those extinctions have taken place on islands. Why are island-dwelling organisms so vulnerable to extinction? Because island populations are relatively small they have little genetic variation for coping with change and are more likely to suffer “random” declines after unexpected catastrophes. And while they are isolated from the fresh genetic variation of mainland populations that isolation has not protected them from a host of harmful human activities.

Lessons learned from islands can now be applied to mainland species. The sobering truth is that humanity is turning the entire surface of the earth into isolated fragments of land that are effectively islands on which species become marooned and are at greater risk of extinction. Shopping malls, highways, and agricultural fields can all be impassable barriers (“oceans”) for species. Even protected “islands” of land cannot preserve their native species: surveys of several National Parks in the western U.S. show that they have lost 40% of their large mammal species since being created less than one hundred years ago.

We cannot know the song of the Dodo now that we have extinguished it. How much more of our biological world will be unknown to future generations? The mission of the new discipline of conservation biology is to develop strategies for retaining viable populations and functioning ecosystems over the long term, given that the world is now “in pieces”.

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8 THOUGHTS ON “SONG OF THE DODO: ISLAND BIOGEOGRAPHY IN A TIME OF EXTINCTION”

Coach Outlet  
on January 29, 2014 at 5:25 PM said:

fr fournit aux internautes la possibilité de créer, r

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on February 4, 2014 at 6:52 PM said:

Call of Duty Black Ops Cheats from Game – Guide – Dog as provided earlier installments, and will be publicized by Activision. A few Black Friday Countdown deals can also be found in the following link from Amazon.

' According to a report from Strategy Informer on Nov.
These sky islands have no immigration, only extinction. This, Quammen concludes, is the phenomenon of ecosystem decay. And, he adds, the theory applies to all fragmented habitats, which means all habitats. What was once “island biogeography” is now “population viability.” Today there are scientists who call themselves “conservation biologists,” who are being sought out by managers of public lands to solve Solomonic problems. The ultimate goal for conservation, Lovejoy says, is “intact, fully diverse ecosystems persisting in reserves.” The Theory of Island Biogeography was a daring, fruitful, and provocative attempt by two young men to merge biogeography with ecology and transform them into a mathematical science. Wherever we wander in this book, you and I, we’re never far from that one. The two young men were Robert MacArthur and Edward O. Wilson. Darwin was a more ingenious theorist, admitted. Hooker became the preeminent botanist of his time. Wallace, much later in life, involved himself in certain crankish interests (including the Land Nationalization Society, an anti-vaccination crusade, and spiritualism) that have made it easier for historians to treat him unfairly. Still, Wallace remains the most heroically appealing, at least to my crankish taste. In Song of the Dodo, he teaches by combining history, environmental science, personal experience and anecdotes—not to mention his wonderfully impish “gossip columnist” quality when he describes personalities and academic battles over major biological questions. That said, he is always respectful of the scientists he interviews and of their work and goes to great lengths to really understand it so that he can give his readers the most accurate version possible of the material he covers. I was first introduced to the fate of the dodo a long time ago, in Thomas Pynchon’s wild phantasmagoria of a novel, Gravity’s Rainbow. Quammen commences with the story of the patriarch of Island Biogeography: Alfred Russel Wallace. Start your review of The Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinctions. Write a review. Herein are the What, When, Where, and Why of evolution and extinction relative to population viability that we are developing an understanding of, as evidenced in insular (i.e. restricted, whether an island or mainland habitat fragment) species. The author does try to elucidate important concepts with layman examples (e.g. mismatched socks), and there is a glossary, but there are other general terms the reader might want a dictionary close by for (e.g. words like nomothetic and idiographic). He follows a chronological progression of island biogeography from Darwin through Jared Diamond (who became hugely famous shortly after the release of this book).