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STORY DETAILS

Title:

The disappearing voice of the forest: Snail stories from Hawai'i

Author:

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[The disappearing voice of the forest: Snail stories from Hawai'i – The Living Archive Soundcloud](#)

Summary:

This audio piece tells the story of the ongoing decline and extinction of Hawai'i's incredible land snails, exploring the diverse ways in which these often overlooked creatures matter for local people and their environments.

Author bio:

Jane Ulman is a multi-award-winning audio program maker and sound artist. Her work includes more than three decades recording wildlife, environmental sounds and voices across Australia and elsewhere.

Thom van Dooren is an environmental philosopher and writer at the University of Sydney and the University of Oslo. He is the author of *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction* and *The Wake of Crows: Living and Dying in Shared Worlds* (both published by Columbia University Press).

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THE DISAPPEARING VOICE OF THE FOREST: SNAIL STORIES FROM HAWAI'I

The Hawaiian Islands were once home to an incredible diversity of terrestrial snails, one of the most diverse assemblages to be found anywhere on earth. Today, the majority of these species are gone and most of those that remain are threatened with extinction. This audio piece tells the story of this ongoing decline and local efforts to prevent it, including the creation of captive populations of snails in the laboratory and behind an elaborate predator-proof fence in the forest. It weaves together the insights of conservationists, Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners, museum curators, and others to convey the significance of these often-disregarded creatures. One key aspect of this significance lies in the cultural associations of snails for Hawaiians, associations which are tied strongly to the traditional understanding that these animals sing in the forest at night. According to most biologists, however, snails have no vocal cords and cannot sing – at least not in the conventional sense of this term. This piece explores this perplexing situation, ultimately concluding that like so much else about these remarkable, disappearing, creatures, their singing must remain something of a mystery.

Produced by Thom van Dooren and Jane Ulman.

This program includes excerpts from interviews with: Dr David Sischo (Director, Snail Extinction Prevention Program), Dr Norine Yeung (Malacology Collection Manager, Bishop Museum), Dr Ken Hayes (Center for Molecular Biodiversity, Bishop Museum), Dr Brenden Holland (Hawai'i Pacific University), Prof. Michael Hadfield (Pacific Biosciences Research Center, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa), Dr Sam 'Olu Gon III (Biologist and cultural advisor, The Nature Conservancy), Prof. Puakea Nogelmeier (Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa), Cody Pueo Pata (Kumu hula and respected cultural practitioner), Lindsay Renshaw (Lab Manager, Snail Extinction Prevention Program). With thanks to Brandy Nālani McDougall for her beautiful vocal contribution and to Keola Beamer for permission to use his recording of "Kahuli Aku" from the album Island Born.

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