



The Ghost with Trembling Wings: Science, Wishful Thinking and the Search for Lost Species

Scott Weidensaul

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A round-the-world detective story about rediscovering vanished species

Three or four times an hour, eighty or more times a day, a unique species of plant or animal vanishes forever. It is, scientists say, the worst global extinction crisis in the last sixty-five million years -- the hemorrhage of thirty thousand irreplaceable life-forms each year. And yet, every so often one of these lost species resurfaces, such as the Indian forest owlet, considered extinct for more than a century when it was rediscovered in 1997. Like heirlooms plucked from a burning house, they are gifts to an increasingly impoverished world.

In *The Ghost with Trembling Wings*, naturalist Scott Weidensaul pursues these stories of loss and recovery, of endurance against the odds, and of surprising resurrections. The search takes Weidensaul to the rain forests of the Caribbean and Brazil in pursuit of long-lost birds, to the rugged mountains of Tasmania for the striped, wolflike marsupial known as the thylacine, to cloning laboratories where scientists struggle to re-create long-extinct animals, and even to the moorlands and tidy farms of England on the trail of mysterious black panthers whose existence seems to depend on the faith of those looking for them. *The Ghost with Trembling Wings* is a book of exploration and a survey of the frontiers of modern science and wildlife biology. It is, in the end, the story of our desire for a wilder, bigger, more complete world.

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