Conservation of “Extinct” Species

1 Graduate Credit Hour (IB546):
1 hour per week: Mondays 9:00-9:50 am

Instructors:
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Course Synopsis: Conservation efforts are often focused on restoring dwindling populations to a self-sustaining entity. But what happens when a self-sustaining population is no longer possible? Is it worth allocating resources to species that consist of 1 individual such as Lonesome George, the Galapagos tortoise, or razorback suckers that have a 0% survival rate in the wild and rely completely on human breeding programs? This seminar will address the idea of conservation of “extinct” species with the goal of classifying and assessing current efforts. The seminar will consist of two parts. The first part will involve a number of background readings that address the idea of conservation of “extinct” species. The second part will involve groups of students presenting a brief literature review of a specific classification of “extinct” species. Students will be assessed on in-class participation and a short (~1-2 page) literature review.

Texts: Readings will be assigned weekly and made available to the class upon assignment.

Student evaluation: Students will be graded based on participation and attendance (80%), leading one discussion (10%), and literature review (10%).

Course Outline
Jan 24th – March 7th
Topics:
- Ethics of conservation
- Should we bring back species?
- What should be considered before allocating resources to an “extinct” species?
- Is there a difference between different levels of extinction with respect to species conservation?
- Are reintroduced individuals the same as protected wild individuals?

March 14th: Spring break

March 21st - April 18th
Student-led presentation topics:
- Conservation of historically extinct species
- Conservation of recently extinct species
- Conservation of extinct in the wild species
- Conservation of functionally extinct species
- Conservation of thought to be extinct species

March 25th - May 2nd
- Recap of conservation of “extinct” species and synthesis of future directions for the field