

Conference: Colonial Dimensions of the Global Wildlife Trade

Monday, 28 November 2022 in Göttingen

The practice of moving live undomesticated animals to different regions has been in place for centuries. Since the middle of the 19th century, however, the trade in wildlife intensified and live animals were transported in growing numbers. While they often were presented as »wild«, some animals such as elephants and camels had been tamed or even domesticated. This begs the question what exactly they needed to embody in order to become of interest for »wild« animal dealers, and for the institutions that would keep them.

The conference sets out to examine these discursive as well as practical effects. It starts from the understanding that the global trade in »wild« animals was not only imbedded in colonial structures and discourses, but equally involved in re-shaping and producing new ones. For instance, new professions and new forms of knowledge emerged in the wake of the trade, e.g., in the form of transportation methods and zoo medicine. Professional animal dealers were also involved in the emerging environmental and nature protection movements of the time, including (monetised) attempts to save animals from extinction and re-introduction of so-called endangered species to the wild.

Tackling these entanglements, the conference will look at key actors involved in the trade and in the movement of the animals, with a focus on the first half of the 20th century. It will also scrutinise the connections of the trade to other related branches, such as the trade in animal material and ethnographic objects, and the spaces that it produced and operated in.

The conference is funded by the German Lost Art Foundation and organised by the Modern History Department of the University of Göttingen in cooperation with the Network for Provenance Research of Lower Saxony. It will take place in-person on Monday, 28 November 2022, at the Georg-August-University in Göttingen.

We welcome participation in-person, but for those who cannot be in Göttingen, it will be possible to attend virtually.

We are looking forward to your participation, please register until 18 November 2022 by emailing Sophia Annweiler (sophia.annweiler@stud.uni-goettingen.de), stating your name, institution, preferred email address and whether you would like to attend in-person or online.

Programme

10:00 Arrival & Registration

10:30 Welcoming Remarks

Dr. Jan Hüsgen (German Lost Art Foundation),

Dr. Claudia Andratschke (Network for Provenance Research of Lower Saxony), and

Prof. Dr. Rebekka Habermas (University of Göttingen)

Introduction by Charlotte Hoes (University of Göttingen)

11:00 Panel I – Global Networks and Local Repercussions: Trading Animals within Colonial Contexts

Chair: Dr. Eva Bischoff (University of Trier)

Prima Nurahmi Mulyasari (Research Center for Area Studies, National Research and Innovation Agency/BRIN, Indonesia)

Global Animal Dealers in Colonial Indonesia in the early 20th century

Annika Dörner (Universität Erfurt)

Camels for Kaiser: Mobilizing Hagenbecks Trading Network to sell 2000 Dromedaries to the German Colonial Army

Dr. Violette Pouillard (French National Centre for Scientific Research / Ghent University)

Van Straelen's networks: Collecting and exhibiting protected animals, Congo-Belgium, ca. 1925-1960

12:45 Lunch Break

13:45 Panel II – Strategies and Make Do: Acquisitions, Trading, and Zoological Gardens

Chair: Prof. Dr. Mieke Roscher (University of Kassel)

Prof. Dr. Raf de Bont (Maastricht University)

The Economy of Rarity: Charles Cordier, Cryptozoology and the Zoo Trade

Barrie Blatchford (Columbia University)

"A Monkey in Every Home": Henry Trefflich and the Twentieth-Century Exotic Animal Trade in America

Dr. Marianna Szczygielska (Czech Academy of Sciences)

Lion Capital: Zoo acquisition strategies in interwar Poland

15:30 Coffee Break

16:15 Panel III – Collecting Animals, Collecting Objects? Entanglements of Colonialism, Ethnology, and Natural Sciences

Chair: Dr. Holger Stöcker (University of Göttingen)

Kerstin Pannhorst (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

"Hecatombs of insects": colonial dimensions of specimen collecting

Dr. Catarina Madruga (Museum für Naturkunde Berlin)

Evaluating value: Practices of acquisition of colonial fauna in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, 1900-1928

Callum Fisher (Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage Berlin)

Empire, Ethnology and the Natural Sciences in Hamburg's Museum Godeffroy

18:30 Keynote

Prof. Dr. Jonathan Saha (Durham University)

Decolonizing Elephants: The Imperial Accumulation of Animal Capital and the End of Empire in Myanmar

* Please note that small changes to the programme may occur.