



# Animal Remains

*The University of Sheffield*

*Animal Studies*

*Research Centre*

*Conference*

*April 29-30th, 2019*

# Animal Remains

*Biennial Conference of  
The University of Sheffield Animal Studies Research Centre (ShARC)*

*April 29-30th, 2019  
Humanities Research Institute, The University of Sheffield, United Kingdom*

## **Keynote Speakers:**

Lucinda Cole, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA  
Thom van Dooren, The University of Sydney, Australia

## **Artist in Residence:**

Steve Baker, The University of Lancashire, UK

Animal remains are everywhere. From the cryogenically-preserved DNA of the extinct Po’ouli bird held in storage at the Frozen Zoo to the ivory tusks of African elephants that flood the market of the illegal wildlife trade, animal bodies have been fashioned into commodities, fetishized visual objects, colonial artifacts, meat, carrion, taxidermic trophies, and biotechnological innovations. Decomposed organic compounds that were once ancient animal and vegetable remains are also converted into fuel and an array of petro-products, while dinosaurs and other prehistoric species make frequent appearances in recent science fiction films like *Jurassic World*.

The fossil in particular has emerged as contested theoretical terrain, as Elizabeth Povinelli suggests in her critique of settler late liberalism (Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism). The fossil is regarded as the “endpoint” of the biological image in W.J.T. Mitchell’s Image Science, and as the threshold that marks the crossover of living things into the “world of rocks” (Manuel DeLanda). Meanwhile, for speculative realists like Timothy Morton, it is a “hyperobject” characterized by its “sensuous connectivity” and withdrawal from humans (Hyperobjects). As Elizabeth Kolbert points out in The Sixth Extinction, the fossil has only relatively recently afforded animals a history, because prior to the seventeenth century, the “category of extinction didn’t exist.” In studies of the Anthropocene, the fossil gestures to the geological as well as the “intersecting biological and chemical” transformations that “intermesh human and natural histories,” according to Stacy Alaimo (“Your Shell on Acid”). Indeed, the fossil — and animal remains more broadly conceived — hover at the periphery of a number of critical inquiries across the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, but have yet to receive sustained and thoughtful engagement.

Building on these emerging developments, this international and cross-disciplinary conference will examine the material histories and futures of animal remains. In which ways, and to what effect, are animal remains figured in narratological frameworks (David Herman, Susan McHugh)? Can animal remains incite us to imagine extinction (Ursula Heise, Thom Van Dooren), and if so, how? What are the material, affective, philosophical, ecological, and biological afterlives of dead animals (Rachel Poliquin, Samuel J.M.M. Alberti)? With the sixth mass extinction underway, how do we apprehend the sheer scale and scope of animal remains,

given the hyper-visibility of some, and the invisibility of others? What are the political and ethical stakes involved in our treatment of animal remains? This conference invites a broad exploration of these kinds of questions. Possible topics or sub-fields include petrocultures, zooarchaeology, dinosaur iconology, zoological gardens, museological/memory studies, cryptozoology, wildlife conservation, de-extinction movements, bio-/cryopolitics, neo-vitalist philosophy, ecologies of putrefaction (see [Lucinda Cole](#)), spatial geographies of rot (see [Jamie Lorimer](#)), new materialisms (inclusive of what [Kim Tallbear](#) calls “an indigenous metaphysic”), decolonizing animals, animal remains and art, extinction studies, and beyond.

**Abstracts of 350 words, along with a 50-word bio (in email body or in doc.x), can be sent to Sarah Bezan ([s.bezan@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:s.bezan@sheffield.ac.uk)) and Robert McKay ([r.mckay@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:r.mckay@sheffield.ac.uk)) by November 23rd, 2018.** Early career scholars and post-graduate researchers are expressly encouraged to submit abstracts, and will be eligible to apply for ShARC Travel Awards to defray the costs of travel. Confirmed participants will be notified by late December 2018. An edited volume on ‘Animal Remains’ will be one of the anticipated outcomes of this meeting, and will be considered for publication in the [Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature](#) series.

*This conference is generously supported by [BIOSEC](#)  
and the [White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities](#)*

