

CROSS-BILLS: Kate Foster and Hayden Lorimer

An exhibition at Glasgow Project Room, November 2005

Introduction

This collaboration began through our shared interest in the lives and deaths of animals, and how these events can be understood in different ways. Crossbills are the basis for project work that we like to call BioGeoGraphical.

Cross-bills is about our search for those birds.

The work draws on a series of exchanges between artist and geographer, and with people whose everyday activities bring them into contact with crossbills. As these people were quick to inform us, crossbills are complex creatures: specialist feeders, taxonomic curiosities and difficult to find. We are interested in these tangled lives.

Crossbills found in Scotland are often accorded a special significance as the only bird that is unique to Britain. Our research took us to remnant pine forests and coniferous plantations in the Cairngorms, and to less likely habitats elsewhere.

We discovered that the study of crossbills can be a matter of sitting, watching, shifting, collecting and displaying. To begin learning the crafts of the field or laboratory is to encounter bodies, things and knowledge on the move.

Cross-bills is an exercise in re-placing practice.

The work on show

Blowing This video work developed as an original piece from the coincidences of our investigation. A crossbill nest and some “clear” eggs were given to us. *8:35 minutes looped.*

Scanning A short video work asking our bodies how we learn to look for crossbills.

Citing (sound work) A compilation of interview material, using crossbill nests as a focal point. Developed from the standard academic practice of interviewing for qualitative ‘data’. *27:26 minutes.*

Sighting (artists’ book) A compilation of visual material concerned with crossbills and cross-billing, in various fields. Developed from observations on the placement of diagrams within academic texts.

Siting (crossbill artifacts) Field material, including items on loan from the Glasgow University Zoology Museum, Nest Collection and the Walter Rothschild Museum at Tring.

This presentation drew on conventions of art and academic practice, and employed various media to communicate different aspects of our investigation. The video was our own development of ideas, the other works may be described as “Quotations”.

The contribution of other people was integral to this work, but we take responsibility for its presentation.

Please note: all biological material was obtained in observance of statutory guidelines