The Map of Memory
An Ecological History of the Planet

Each dot on the map represents a story of the natural world, from wondrous stories of abundance, to accounts of loss and degradation, to stories of conservation and hope.

The Map invites each one of us to share memories that connect us emotionally to the natural world, creating a collective online memorial that’s both personal and close to home.

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“The Map of Memory: An Ecological History of the Planet”

1850 CE
The Passenger Pigeon

10000 CE - 2016
The Colorado River

1999 CE
Fireflies, by Soo Joo

“We lost the abundance of fireflies everywhere. No stars either, and we need the fireflies more than ever now, but they aren’t here. They leave the polluted places before we do. Bring the light back.”
The Map of Memory invites anyone to add a personal memory about a specific species, plant or habitat that has diminished in abundance or disappeared completely, or a story of recovery they've witnessed in their own environment.

Historical accounts and in-depth timelines that populate the Map of Memory help us see the transformations that take place over generations. Tracing ecological histories of major species and habitats around the world, they show the incremental effects of human development, pollution, and habitat degradation over time, but also stories of restoration and recovery, highlighting the resilience of nature and the critical importance of conservation.

BUT MOST CRUCIAL TO THE MAP OF MEMORY ARE THE PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS
Over 1500 personal stories have already been submitted from all over the world, and students will have the opportunity to add their voice to this growing collection of memories. Students should consider what they’ve witnessed changing in the natural world, and make an effort to express it in concise and evocative terms. But more important than their own stories, are gathering those of their parents, grandparents, and other family and community members who can share with them memories from decades before. Through this engagement students can connect intergenerationally with their family, community, and environment, allowing them to relate personally to biodiversity loss and habitat degradation. Memories that emerge from these personal conversations inevitably help readers feel a more tangible connection to the place or species described. When interviewing people in the community, students should also ask for any photographs or relevant media that could help illustrate the memories discussed.

PERSONAL MEMORIES
A COLLECTIVE ONLINE MEMORIAL

Song of the Night
by Eli Boyd - Personal Memory – Fredericktown, OH 43019, USA - 1968 CE

The loud and soothing thrumming on summer nights of little frogs and insects. I was back home last year and the night was nearly silent.

Photo credit: courtesy of the New York Public Library.

Black Bucks
by Sibharth Sighn - Personal Memory - Lodge en route to Narlai, India - 1963 CE

“When my father was growing up he remembers traveling in a car and having to wait more than 15 minutes for huge herds of antelopes to cross! The black buck is one of India’s most beautiful antelope. It was very popular game and hunted for centuries. It is an endangered species today and protected by law. One of the main reasons for the survival of the antelope is many parts of Rajasthan are the Bishnoi community. They protect nature by religion and are arguably the first ecologists of the world. The antelope numbers decreased drastically in the 1960s and 1970s when hunting was not regulated. Before that the Maharajas killed a lot, but in a systematic manner which kept the numbers up.”

Help us build a global online memorial to the planet. Please share collected memories by going to www.whatismissing.net/#add-a-memory.
Lost Winter, by Nicholas Benson
Personal Memory – Newport, RI - 1972 CE

“I remember when the ice would cover Narragansett bay. No more.”

Nothing Lasts Forever, by Griffith Gosling
Personal Memory – Frankfurt, Germany – 2001 CE

“When I was a boy I lived near a grand forest lush with nature. I would spend hour's playing in those woods, my own personal hideout. However, upon returning after 10 years I found that my hideout was replaced with a bustling neighborhood next to a city.”

Fireflies, by Soo Joo
Personal Memory – 1999 CE

“We lost the abundance of fireflies- everywhere. No stars either, and we need the fireflies more than ever now, but they aren't here. They leave the polluted places before we do. Bring the light back..”

Meadowlarks, by Paul Madden
Personal Memory – 1990 CE

“After the long winters here, in early April the meadowlarks would arrive and announce the new season with their song, “Spring is here.” They would be everywhere in the meadows. Now we very rarely see them and we never hear their song.”
What Is Missing? From the environment, from nature

Do you have a personal memory about a specific species (animal, bird, fish) or a habitat (forest, river, stream, grassland) that you remember as being more abundant that has now disappeared? It can be something you remember or something your parents or grandparents remember and have told you about.

(bonus points for stories your grandparents tell you that were told to them by their grandparents!!)

Approximately what year is your memory from?

Where is your memory located?

Can you remember how things looked and sounded then? How the environment made you feel?

How have things changed since then?

Do you know why things changed the way they did?

Do you think its possible that we could restore things to the way they were?

After discussing these questions, ask your interviewee to summarize their memory on the following page.
WHAT IS MISSING?

In one sentence, tell us your memory:

Write a more elaborate description here:

If you have a photo that helps illustrate the memory, please attach it to this form.
Or email it to your interviewer or directly to What Is Missing? at stories@whatismissing.net

Tell us about you: name: e-mail: location: age:

The response to the questions above, as well as any photos or footage provided, is for a research-based art project entitled What is Missing?, and could be published in a book as well as online.

I hereby grant permission for my writing and photographs to be published as part of What is Missing?

name signature date