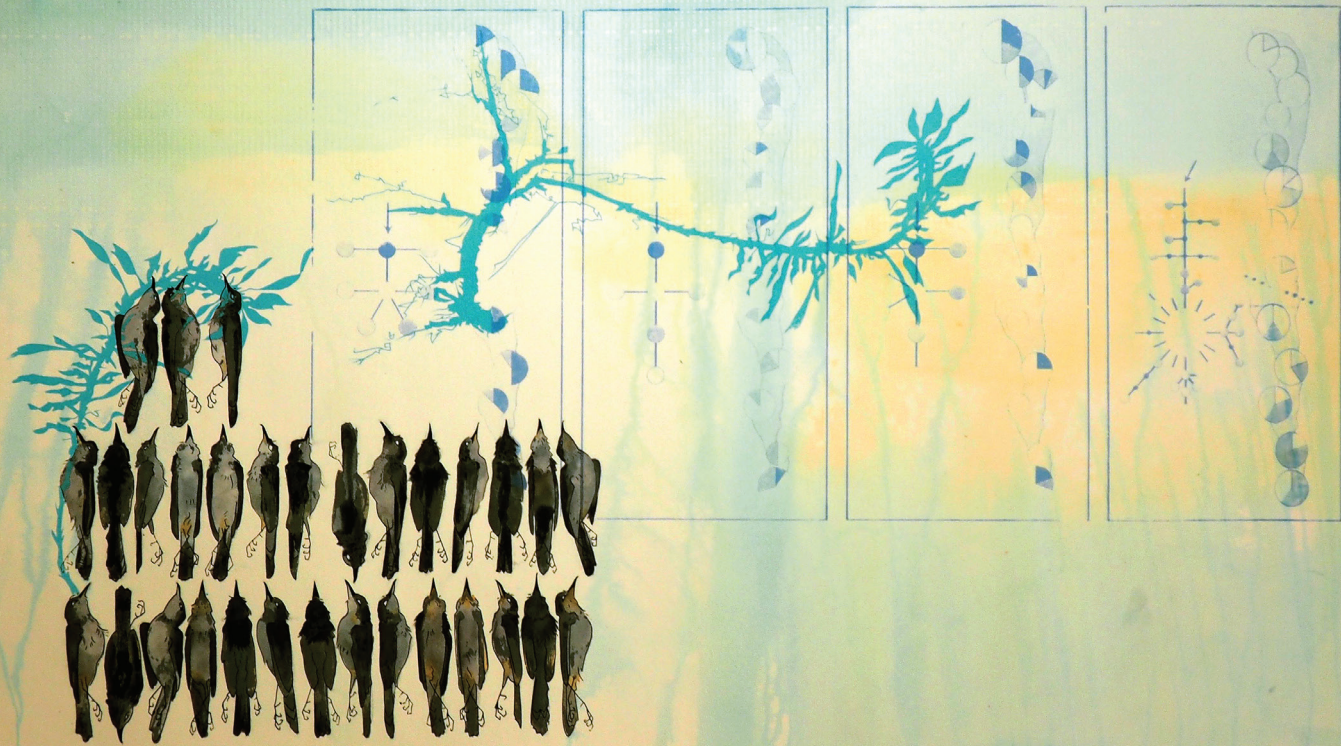


An abstract geometric design on a teal background. It features three concentric circles and several radial lines. The lines are a light cream color. Some lines are solid, while others are dashed. The lines intersect to form a grid-like pattern of triangles and quadrilaterals. The design is partially cut off by the edges of the frame.

# EMILY ARTHUR: ENDANGERED









Collaboration between the Moore Laboratory of Zoology and Emily Arthur has been a great opportunity for us, and we hope that Emily can say the same. Artists and scientists make natural partners, but these collaborations are unfortunately rare. We spend so much of our lives trying to understand the natural world, yet we scientists are often at a loss to describe our spiritual connection to the Earth. Emily has an amazing ability to tell a powerful story using images; she has provided us with a new context to understand the imperiled Coastal California Gnatcatcher and the ecosystem it inhabits.

**James Maley, PhD**

Moore Laboratory of Zoology  
Biology Department  
Occidental College

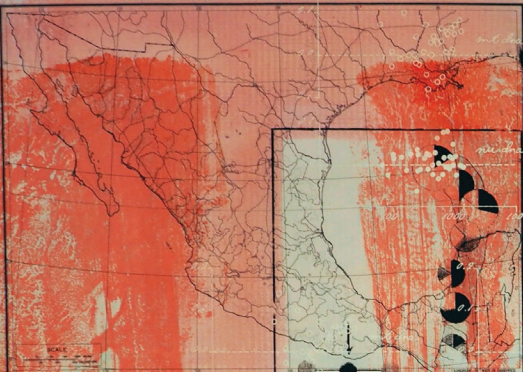
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*Gnatcatchers and Coastal Sage (with Pale Data),*  
2015, screen print on paper, 26 x 40 inches

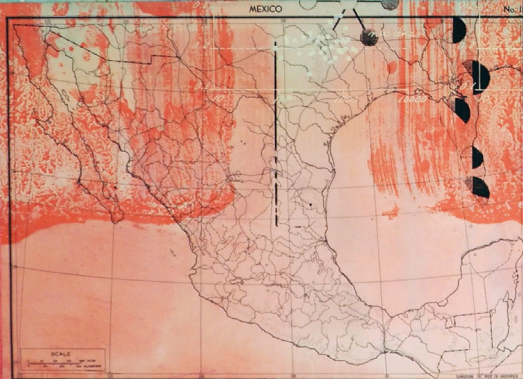


MEXICO

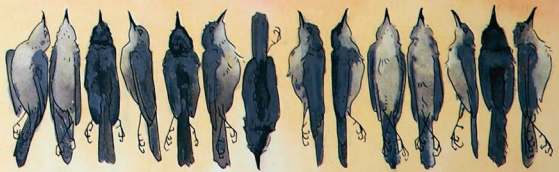
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GOODE'S SERIES OF BASE MAPS  
No. 112



GOODE'S SERIES OF BASE MAPS  
No. 112



Emily Arthur's solo exhibit *Endangered* is a Native woman's journey through a threatened environment filled with beautiful songbirds, butterflies, deer, and serpents. The viewer is invited to participate in an intimate and up-close-and-personal experience of life in a landscape threatened by its loss of natural habitat.

At times, Arthur utilizes pale and delicate watercolor wash backgrounds of American flora and fauna. In stunning contrast, the etching *Snake and Vine* depicts a dark and dramatic sinewy serpent, poised to strike a butterfly while a distracted bird calmly sits on its coiled neck. This particular work may possibly represent a metaphor for the Cherokee story of a bird that helps the community by landing on and identifying Spearfinger Woman's vulnerable places. The people are saved by the assistance of birds.

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*Gnatcatchers and Blue (with Base Maps)*, 2015, screen print on paper, 26 x 40 inches

*White Deer in Flight Pattern*, a screen print on paper, is another powerfully presented graphic work with positive and negative images with layers of meanings and perspectives. The flight patterns of migratory birds and animals give rich depth to this remarkable art work. It represents Arthur's advocacy for a "place for the animals" in our shrinking planet.

John J. Audubon and Mark Catesby were notable printmakers of wildlife and nature; however, Emily Arthur's art adds even richer dimensions of the original inhabitants of life on Turtle Island. Her influence and inclusion of American Indian culture and storytelling, through printmaking, of those that fly, crawl, walk, and share the bounty of the land's natural resources is important.

**Juanita Pahdopony (Comanche)**

A decorative graphic consisting of numerous overlapping circles of varying sizes, some solid and some outlined, arranged in a cluster in the bottom right corner of the page.





Much has been written over the course of the last two decades concerning new forms of global communications, diasporas and the resulting hybrid mixings. This “trending” factor has become so ubiquitous as to be carefully avoided by serious art commentators. It is difficult however, to avoid speaking of intercultural migrations and displacements when confronted with the works of artist Emily Arthur. Her central motif, some may argue her iconic signature style, is of one of movement; movement across landscapes, movement from earth to sky, movement of creatures both powerful and threatened. These intersecting worlds are ever colliding, often in brutal and unforgiving circumstances. It is in these moments and in these places that Arthur is drawn.

When tasked with the assignment of characterizing Arthur’s works, the themes of displacement,

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*Elements of Endangerment (in Blue Star Map),*  
2015, screen print on paper, 20 x 30 inches

biological mixings and forced alienation are inescapable. Her messengers – those most vulnerable and threatened – serve as central characters in the deceptively simple passion plays she scripts in her evocative printmaking, drawings and installations. These palettes call for careful witnessing, their layered and delicate washings of colored inks on paper betraying our collective denials.

Arthur’s efforts highlight the forced migrations, the stories both tender and traumatic that narrate our times. Her most recent intervention, *Re-Riding History: From the Southern Plains to the Matanzas Bay*, is a 2015 co-curated exhibit and symposium she organized commemorating the forced removal of Indigenous Southern Plains leaders to the military complexes of Florida at the turn of the last century. Seventy-two artists submitted works on paper chronicling the effects of human suffering at Fort Marion, now known as Castillo de San Marcos, a National Park Service site.<sup>1</sup> While the city of St. Augustine

celebrated the occasion of its 450-year historic founding, Arthur and her colleagues inserted the veiled histories of assimilation and imprisonment, urging viewers to “reclaim the telling of this story.”<sup>2</sup>

In her current exhibit *Emily Arthur: Endangered* the crimes committed are equally chronicled. The setting is the coastline of southern California where a fragile ecozone known as the Coastal Sage Scrub region is currently protected by a small bird known unassumingly as the California Gnatcatcher. This single subspecies—some estimate only 2,500 total birds—protects an expanse of wild rugged shorelines where a host of insects, plants and animals still survive. Competing groups of scientists argue the merits of protection vs. development, based on both DNA and the physical markings of the birds themselves.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will determine whether an estimated 197,000 acres of California coastline will be made available for real estate

interests by the end of 2015.<sup>4</sup> This potential calamity is almost too great to fathom, leading many to ignore or dismiss the impending dilemma. But Arthur has chosen to stay; to sit with the evidence at hand, a witness to the quiet crisis on the horizon.

Arthur’s projects seek to interrogate systems of power. Her impulse is to the center of the tensions, to the very epicenter of the push and pull of human frailty. Our impossible foibles are chronicled in elegant and sparse vignettes that capture the moment at which we could either teeter forward or draw back. We are with her at the cliffside. Do we run or turn our faces to the wind?

The great American Indian intellectual Vine Deloria Jr. stated, “It is becoming increasingly apparent that we shall not have the benefits of this world for much longer. The imminent and expected destruction of the life cycle of world ecology can only be prevented by a radical shift

in outlook from our present naive conception of this world as a testing ground to a more mature view of the universe as a comprehensive matrix of life forms” (p. 288).<sup>5</sup> This matrix is ever-present, waiting for an answer.

**Nancy Mithlo, Ph.D.**

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<sup>1</sup> Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida is now known as the U.S. National Park Service site Castillo de San Marcos.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.reridinghistory.org/>

<sup>3</sup> The artist is grateful for the support of Occidental College’s Moore Lab of Zoology, Art History and Visual Arts department, the Center for Community Based Learning and the Remsen Bird Fund.

<sup>4</sup> Louis Sahagun, “Developers seek end to federal protections for California gnatcatcher.” Los Angeles Times, June 29, 2014.

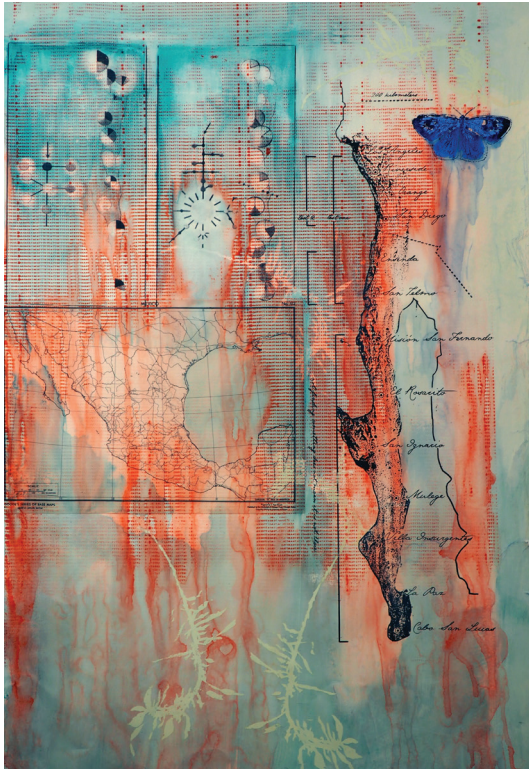
<sup>5</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. (Golden, CO): Fulcrum Publishing; 30th Anniversary Edition. 2003.

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*White Deer in Flight Pattern*, 2014, screen print on paper, 22 x 15 inches







Juanita Pahdopony is a renowned Comanche educator, poet, and artist. She holds an A.A., B.A. and M.Ed. in gifted and talented education. She served as the Dean of Academic Affairs and Interim President before retiring from Comanche Nation College where she taught Indigenous Art. She has given numerous presentations in art, Comanche history and storytelling and has exhibited her works at galleries and museums in local, state, and national venues. She is the co-founder of the Comanche Nation College's Annual Invitational Film Festival.

**Juanita Pahdopony: What's your statement of the artwork in your exhibition, *Endangered*?**

Within the history of printmaking, lithography, etching, and screen print have been used to publish botanical and ornithological illustrations for the colonizing purposes of naming,

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*Coastal Sage (with Map and Blue)*, 2015, screen print on paper, 40 x 26 inches

identification, capture, and collection. My contemporary work in printmaking seeks to change that perspective from subjugation of the land to a forward thinking perspective of how plant and animal species carry the story of human impact on environment.

This series of work has been made in collaboration with the Moore Laboratory of Zoology, Occidental College, Los Angeles, California and guided by the research of John E. McCormack and James M. Maley. The artwork responds directly to the concept of conservation genetics and how to interpret scientific results in studies when the distinctness of a species of conservation concern is in question. In 2013 land developers petitioned the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove the coastal songbird, California Gnatcatcher, from listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act which could open 197,000 acres of currently protected habitat to human development.

These contemporary prints of plants and animal life serve as witness to our changing environment of population growth, water management, sustainability, wilderness conservation and environmental protection.

**JP: I'd like for you to expand on 'subjugation of the land' and 'impact' on the environment. Can you link this to the many Eastern Woodland tribes Creation Stories which involve birds.**

I see the landscape as living matter rather than a backdrop for human events. The idea of *impact* is very different from *influence*, which suggests a kind of exchange between the land and us. One example of negative impact on the environment in North Carolina is the woolly aphid, which is decimating the eastern Hemlock trees. It is said that the aphid was introduced to American forests in order to control and eliminate another insect. Hemlocks provide a deep shade over story climate for rhododendron, ferns and other native plant species. I spent a lot of my

childhood under those hemlocks and loss of these trees will cause a damaging chain reaction to the forest. No other tree can replace the habitat the hemlock creates.

The landscape and stories of the eastern woodland tribes are important to me because my paternal grandmother is descended from the Eastern Band of the Cherokee nation. Home for me is an area of North Carolina called the Cherokee Foothills. These western Carolina Mountains include specific locations where many of the early Cherokee stories take place.

For example, my mother's land is located near a mountain where Spearfinger Woman built a rock bridge to get through the woods more easily. She was a feared shapeshifter who would cut out the liver of an unsuspecting person with her bony forefinger. Warriors killed Spearfinger with the help of a songbird, a chickadee, who flew from a tree and sat in the place where the heart of Spearfinger could be pierced. The songbird

knew that her heart was on the inside of her bony, spear hand, which she kept folded into a fist.

I have many life experiences in these foothills with the plants and animals found there. I stopped to hear a bird when I was walking in the woods. As I tried to see it hiding in rhododendron I heard another sound, the distinct rattle of a snake. I would have walked into striking distance of a rattlesnake if I had not heard that little, loud bird and the protective warning.

**JP: Where does this show sit in your art career?**

This is the first time in my career in which I was invited to respond to an active controversy between scientists, environmentalists and government policy as the protection of an endemic bird population is threatened. A majority of this artwork is in response to my residency at the Moore Laboratory of Zoology where the research of John E. McCormack and James M. Maley is challenging negative results in studies

effecting conservation of a species. Zoologist, Dr. McCormack explains that the push to remove the California Gnatcatcher from the endangered species list did not use modern genetic scientific methods and was funded by developers.<sup>1</sup> It is my first exhibition experience with zoologists; scientific data collection and how this data could be manipulated to control the outcome.

**JP: My artwork focuses on visual narratives, what's your focus?**

Yes, I also work in narrative framework. I think of image-making as telling a story in which the narrative is affected by the experience of the viewer. The meaning of an image can change through linear time or through our cyclical life experience. I am not concerned with a single definition of artwork only that the act of making art is an offering. Some viewers will see the story presented to them and some viewers will never see story or meaning presented to them.

**JP: I used Berlo's "Native North America" as a textbook for my Indigenous Art class at Comanche Nation College. It discusses "three moments of art-making: Sacred and Secular; Political and Domestic; Ceremonial and Commercial." Describe your work using these indigenous ways to categorize art. For example, a viewer might categorize your advocacy work for the protection of birds as being 'political' or even as a 'sacred' obligation as a Native woman. After all, birds are central characters in the Cherokee story of Spearfinger.**

It is difficult to consider the delisting of the California Gnatcatcher, which serves as an umbrella species protecting 197,000 acres of a coastal sage ecosystem. Additional native plant and animal species which are threatened such as the Palos Verdes Blue butterfly would be lost if the land is developed. So yes, I would say that this is a practice worthy of devotion. Art making, especially printmaking, involves ritual and community. I value the possibility

that the artwork may be smuggled into the secular, commercial world encoded with all of these elements: sacred, ceremonial, political and cultural.

I learned a powerful lesson from Harry Mithlo and you during the project, *Re-Riding History: From the Southern Plains to the Matanzas Bay*. I saw how my academic training had created a western perspective of my current experience. I was angry there were no historical markers indicating where hundreds of Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Cheyenne, Arapaho and Caddo people suffered imprisonment. I wanted the National Park Service to document an indigenous perspective of history and honor prisoner drawings on the walls of the fort labeled as graffiti. My focus became the empty shell of the prison instead of the living, vital culture, which is thriving despite imprisonment, removal and the cultural genocide of boarding schools. I experienced a kind of correction, in order to see what was gorgeous and alive in this moment and not

focus where there was emptiness. If a good fire is burning it is an insult not to be in awe of it.

**JP: Yes, after all, the fires represent living cultures. What about ‘visual metaphors’ sharing a meaning or meanings that are not stated in your work?**

In this body of work I used diagrams and illustrations developed by collaborating zoologists, John E. McCormack, James M. Maley and their colleague Robert M. Zinc.<sup>2</sup> Their illustrations include patterns of geographic variation in the DNA along the California coast into Mexico, gnatcatcher population groupings and DNA sequencing. The data becomes an illegible pattern with no scientific truth when translated into screenprint multiples. However, if some of the data was “shoddy science” in its original publication, it had no truth. The real meaning is to see the consequence of delisting endangered species and the devastating impact on our environment. Additional meaning within the false

data is to see a negative power structure driven by land development, which can allow this to happen.

Artwork from previous exhibitions is imbedded with soil and water samples from a marshy area that once supported turtles, wild birds and deer, but is now the location of a strip mall. Days before the wetland area was paved over, I documented the last of this environment by having an onsite construction truck drive over the paper. The artwork moves beyond image as metaphor, and contains an important physical record of the terrible loss.

<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles Times, "Readers React, The shoddy science behind developer's push to delist the California gnatcatcher," July 2, 2014. <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/readersreact/la-le-0702-wednesday-gnatcatcher-20140702-story.html>

<sup>2</sup> The Auk 130(3):449-458, 2013 The American Ornithologists' PHYLOGEOGRAPHY OF THE CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER (*POLIOPTILA CALIFORNICA*) USING MULTILOCUS DNA SEQUENCES AND ECOLOGICAL NICHE MODELING: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSERVATION. ROBERT M. ZINK,<sup>1,3</sup> JEFFREY G. GROTH,<sup>2</sup> HERNAN VÁZQUEZ-MIRANDA,<sup>1</sup> AND GEORGE F. BARROWCLOUGH<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Bell Museum and Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108, USA; and <sup>2</sup>Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, New York 10024, USA

The Auk Volume 132, 2015, pp. 380-388 DOI: 10.1642/AUK-14-184.1  
COMMENTARY Interpreting negative results with taxonomic and conservation implications: Another look at the distinctness of coastal California Gnatcatchers, John E. McCormack\* and James M. Maley



*Songbird (with Coastal Map in Brown),*  
2015, screen print on paper, 30 x 22 inches



*House of Trust, 2014, color etching*  
with chine-collé, 20 x 16 inches





*Songbirds (with Butterfly)*, 2015, screen print  
on paper, 20 x 30 inches



*Snake and Vine*, 2010, etching with chine-collé,  
16 x 19 inches



*Threatened (with Deception)*, 2015,  
screen print on paper, 15 x 11 inches



*Black Water (with dark bird)*, 2015, etching and  
screen print on paper with chine collé, 50 x 45 inches





*All that is Motionless*, 2012, color etching  
with chine-collé, 15 x 11 1/2 inches



*Palos Verdes Blue (with Peony)*, 2015,  
screen print on paper, 19 x 14 inches



*Songbirds (with Small Butterfly)*, 2015,  
screen print on paper, 20 x 30 inches

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University of Nevada, Reno











