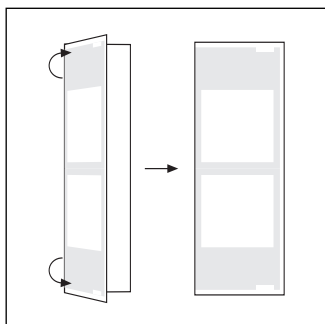


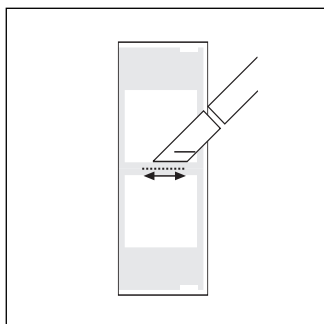
# DIFFUSION

## Construction

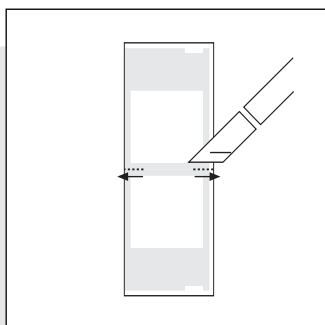
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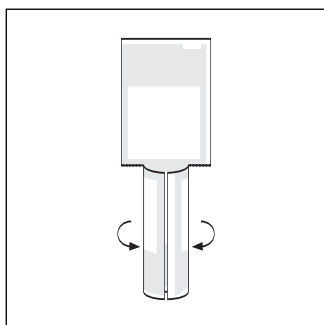
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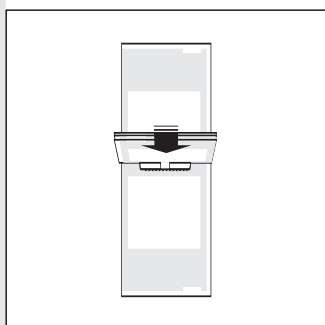
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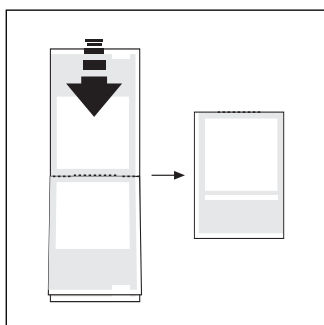
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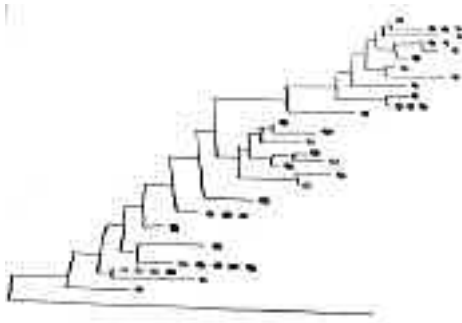
- 1: First, fold each A4 sheet in half along the vertical axis.
- 2: Using a craft knife or scalpel, cut a horizontal slot along the centre dotted line of the first A4 sheet. (pages 1/2/13/14)
- 3: Then cut along the dotted lines on all the other sheets. Make sure to cut to the very edges of the paper.
- 4: Stack the folded sheets in ascending order with the even numbers at the top. Curl the bottom half of the second A4 page (pages 3/4/23/24).
- 5: Thread the curled page through the centre slot of the first A4 page. Repeat this process with the third (pages 5/6/21/22), fourth (pages 7/8/19/20), fifth (pages 9/10/17/18), and sixth A4 sheet (pages 11/12/15/16) with the even pages in ascending order.
- 6: When all the pages have been threaded through, check the pagination. Finally, fold the booklets in half along the horizontal axis.

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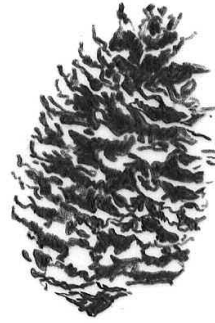


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There are murmurs of more than neighbourly nesting in the forests of Abernethy, Rothiemurchus or Deeside. Co-habitation has consequences for science. Diagnostic difficulties. Tracing strings and sequences to disclose genetic truths. A century of specialised enquiry and still taxonomy puzzles.



Perhaps the target has always been shifting.  
Hybridbird.  
Identities, we are told, are not designated, but emergent, always in flux.  
A perverse biodiversity.  
Conservation undone by the object of its affections.  
Outstripped by the thing itself.  
Unseated as species icon  
and crowned as feathered courier for radical species ideas.



Crop failure is the tipping point for migrants to take flight, arriving on the wind in irregular formation. Amassing, to produce occasional eruptions. A trans-national search for abundant fruiting trees ends with shared space. Company kept. Refuge found. Exile taken. No shrill cries of 'seed piracy!' or 'nature's vagabonds!'  
And, for some, just as suddenly, a return exodus.

**CROSS-BILLS**  
SHARED WORK IN  
BIOGEOGRAPHY  
Hayden Lorimer and Kate Foster



Twisted words,  
slim peckings,  
ruffled feathers,  
from the search for a bird:  
*Loxia curvirostra*, crossbill.

What truths might a crossed bill tell?

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organisations concerned with issues of identity and place. investigate partnerships between the arts, academia and civil society International Arts Centre. The eBooks and Creative Lab demonstrate and Commission in London and in Dawson City, Canada with the Klondike Centre; in London in the Proposcis Studio; with the Canadian High collaborative ventures in Scotland with Glenmore Outdoor Education day Creative Lab. The project research has taken place as part of short film, a set of StoryCubes, this series of Diffusion eBooks and a two relationships between people, language, identity and place and includes a March 2005. Topographies & Tales is a project concerned with commissioned by Proposcis alongside the Topographies & Tales project in This publication is part of the second Liquid Geography series

DIFFUSION eBook design by Studio Tonne (studio@studiotonne.com) British Library Cataloguing-in-publication data: a catalogue record for this publication is available at the British Library.

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 www.diffusion.org.uk  
 Hayden Lorimer and Kate Foster  
**CROSS-BILLS**  
**SHARED WORK IN BIOGEOGRAPHY**  
 LIQUID GEOGRAPHY: Topographies and Tales

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Cross-bills is shared work, and part of a developing project, BioGeoGraphy. BioGeoGraphy has residence in the Department of Geography & Geomatics, University of Glasgow, and involves an artist (Kate Foster) and a community of geographers including Hayden Lorimer. BioGeoGraphy is supported by the Leverhulme Trust. The authors would like to thank all others who generously helped compile this book.

**References**

Tongues tied and tired ears are to be found on either side of a possible story. Breathless efforts to recount past happenings, other places, are liable to wander and all too prone to frustrate.

Once brought back here things from out there so seldom hold form. Transit wears away at thickness, reduces texture. Passage breaks down whole stuff. Leaving sentences as bit parts.

To do fieldwork is to set off accepting a certain version of defeat. We spend time out-of-doors always anticipating the moments and mementos that will submit ultimately to extraction.

Feet might find purchase, unmarked terrain may come to be known, significant features mapped. But when the contours of fieldwork slip off the map,



Even topography, normally such welcome relief for the geographer. What will become of our reports from amidst the thick of it?

A search for ways to present the fullness of the bird. A desire to retain something of its liveliness. Flocklore has it that that the body of a dead crossbill never decays.

words too can lose sure footing.

Step aside, disorientation holds you in its sway.  
An apprenticeship in crossbill hunting plucks  
landscape out from the picturesque.

In one fell swoop.

The long reach of the mountain panorama  
bi-focused into a black-cupped close-up.  
Across undulating ground, attentions tilted upward  
by forty-five degrees. Neck craned to scan the  
pinewood canopy. The simplest task becomes a  
sudden strain. When in search of something,  
how do we learn to look?

All tangled up in the just-out-of-sight. Each  
possible line of flight, each shift in the light,  
carries a private burden of expectation.

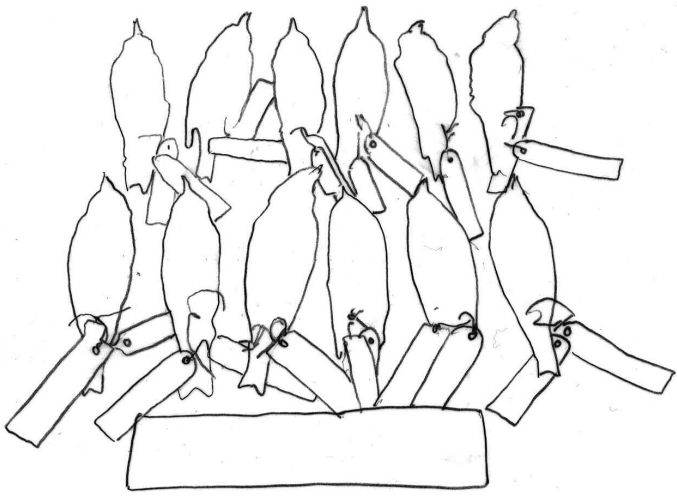
#### FIELD TIPS TO TRAIN A GIMLET EYE

Scottish crossbills:

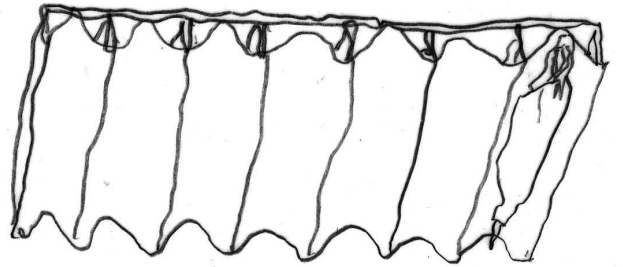
- are particular in their choice of habitat
- seek out tree crowns for a nesting site
- favour “stressed” trees and north-east facing branches
- prefer a grainy mosaic of pines, larches and spruce
- are fastidious eaters seeking out the choicest cones
- frequent ground haunts such as drinking pools



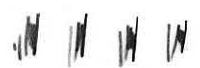
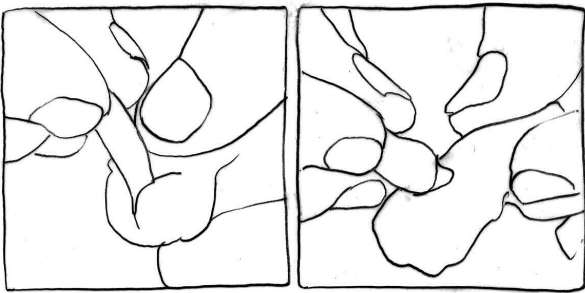
There are other ways of working. Arts and crafts of  
field and workshop that – though long since  
having had their day – still hold fascination.  
Hushed gatherings of men, eager to deal in eggs  
and trade in skins.  
Stretch up, peer into a small world of snatched  
clutches and nimble fingered cut-ups.



Curators keep skins in all shapes and sizes.  
And lay them to rest.



Pencil work does less damage. A careful exercise  
in pale shading that takes only phenomena and  
encounters captive.  
Graphing the crossbill by its bio- and its  
geo-offers more than consolations of technique.  
Elusive birdlife caught fast in grey points and lines.  
A kind of hording.



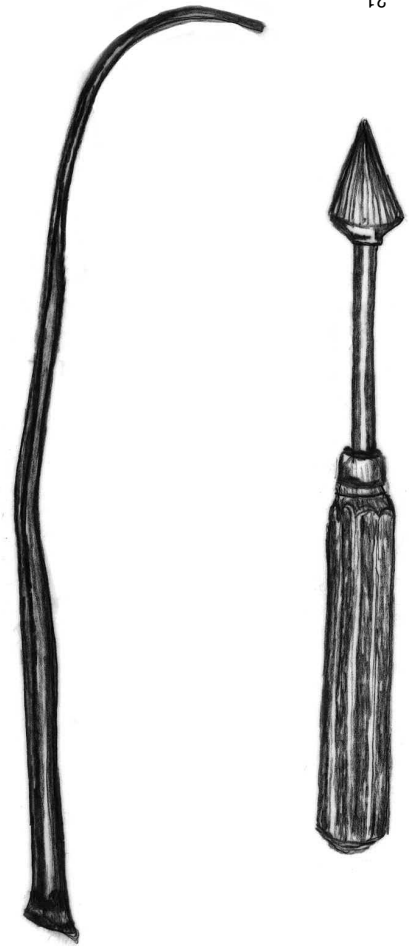
Slit things open.  
Snipping. Trimming.  
Empty insides out.  
Skinning. Slicing.  
Draw stuff together.  
Moulding. Stitching.

Number 10 in a series of 50:



Collecting at several steps remove.  
 A 'stiffener' as they were known in the trade.  
 A card once tucked neatly inside a pack of fags.

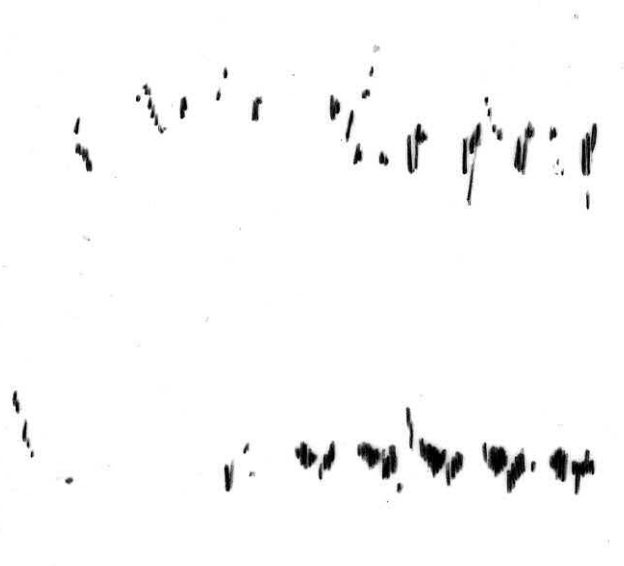
Presumably anxious fingers pulled first for the white-tip-most-likely, lit up and dragged deep. Rather than looking to see what British Bird was roosting beneath the craving. Or perhaps, the card mattered more than this, for an avid city birder, pacing pavements and scanning corner-shop shelves in search of the rarest of species.



There are thrills and temptations in the chase.  
 Beware, of a cult of inquiry all too ready to transform research subjects into fugitives.  
 Name names: field method and quarry.

Shift the balance of the search. Seek out species of passionate enthusiast and sorts of ornithological expertise. The old and the new life-worlds of the bird. Chronicle avifaunal assemblies.

Hear my sonogram.



Natural descriptions of origin can be traced in shape and form.  
 A calliper science.  
 First conducted in small degrees and the drop of a plumb line.  
 Bill depth and head size,  
 a typology of avian races.  
 Loxia, Ernst Hartert, 1904.  
 Biometric classifications allow for crossbill distribution to be charted across the Northern hemisphere. Species ranging from *himalayensis* to *balearica*. A means to know *curvirostra* from *pytyopsittacus*. A way to draw a fine line between *anglica* and *scotica*.

Still the standard work of reference, *Pine Crossbills*, was penned by a paid-up member of the awkward squad.

A washbuckler, schooled in the old ways.  
Clad head to toe in field mystique. A poacher and a gamekeeper. A lynchpin in secretive egging circles. A militant outrider. And bird lover.

Chances given and blown. With the greatest precision. Then swaddled. And sold for a song.

Desmond Nethersole-Thompson (*Pine Crossbills* p. 207)

Dug and ate parasites. Meadow pipit singing.  
Sheep baahing.  
‡became alert when hoodie called.  
Shower of rain from north.  
‡ twists round head to wind.  
Shuffles and works mandibles. Wind ruffles  
her crown feathers.  
‡ dozing.

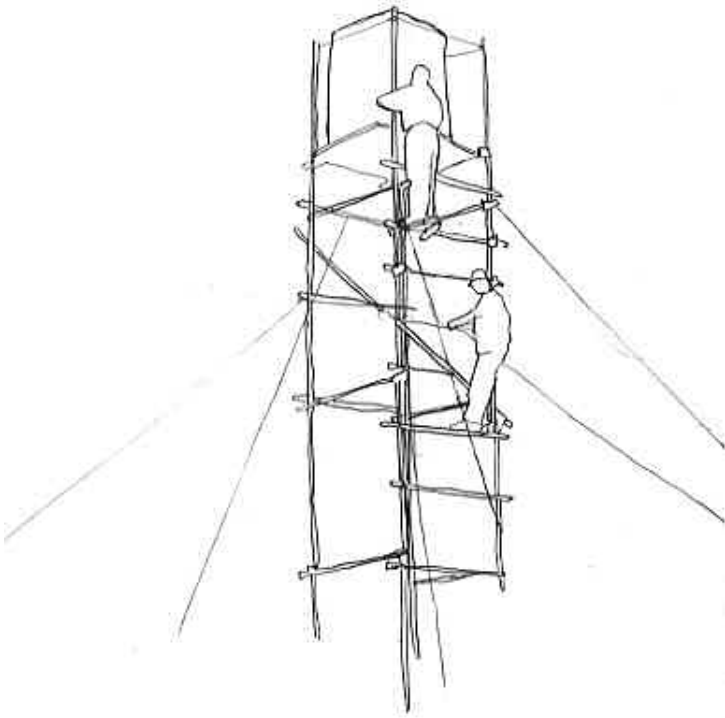
1947 Things seen from a pylon hide:

But only with patience in reserve.  
That treasured eye for a bird. Like Hosking.  
Or Markham.  
Or better still, DNT: exemplary "arsen".  
Keeper of chill vigils and nest diaries.  
Long hours perched to document *Loxia Life*.

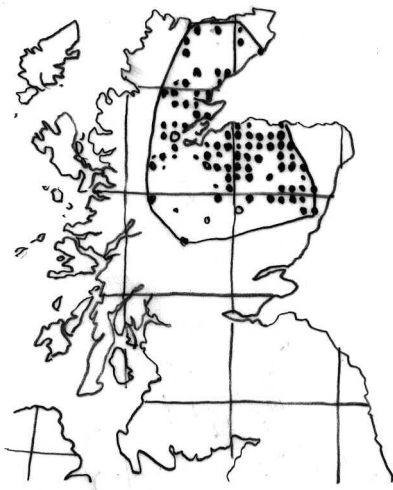


Global extent cleaved off to two sharp-edged corners, among relic stands of ancient pines. A rationale for 'Red List' status: *scottica*, the nation's only endemic bird. Indigenous register.





Well maintained borders are much in vogue these days: defining where one thing ends and another begins.



World distribution  
Scottish crossbill



From worlds inside, back out. There are joys to be had observing private lives and charismatic behaviour.

From the East, they come flocking. Commons and Parrots seeking residency. Crossbills leaving behind landlocked Mitteleuropa, the boreal forests of the Baltic, Fennoscandia, the wooded plains west of the Urals. Continental cousins have only flighty respect for island sovereignty.

