

Extinct Birds Take Flight!

Title

Last Thursday night, an extraordinary volume launched in the Rough Trade East music shop just off Brick Lane deep in the hubbub of fashionable East London. Artist Ralph Steadman's *Extinct Boids* ain't no ordinary bird book. With a lively commentary from the pen of filmmaker, Ceri Levy, this elegant volume charts Steadman's backing for the 2011 art exhibition, *Ghosts of Gone Birds*, a show which raised profile and support for BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions Programme.

Asked by Levy to produce one picture, Steadman unleashed his infamous pens, and set off on a journey of epic creation that finally filled an entire room of the exhibition. Birds real and imagined, louche and languid, flamboyant and bizarre, splattered from his pens day after day. Some are the extinction pin-ups: Great Auk, Passenger Pigeon, and a stolid grumpy off-green Dodo who could blame it. Others are the backroom boids of extinction, like Snail-eating Coua and Red-moustached Fruit-Dove, late of Madagascar and French Polynesia respectively. But perhaps the greatest group are the made-up Steadmania, the Gob-Swallow, Needless Smut, the Angered Maggot Sleet, and Lesser Peruvian Blue-beaked Blotswerve, among others, birds culled from Steadman's superbly quirky imagination, worked up as he explained to an eager launch audience - from a first beguiling ink splat on paper.

The resulting works fill *Extinct Boids*, bringing a poignant sense of loss for the species that are extinct already and, frankly, a sense of deep concern for the current crop of Critically Endangered birds, the 197 species that are on cusp of extinction, and which are the focus of our [Preventing Extinctions](#) work, the drivers for both *Extinct Boids*, and *Ghosts* Based on his e-mails, diary entries and phone conversations with Ralph Steadman, Ceri Levy's text provides a running commentary for the pictures, detailing the particular stories that lie behind the each piece. Take, for example, the Canary Islands Oystercatcher, *Haematopus maedewaldoi*, lost in the 1940's from islands familiar to many holidaymakers, which, as Levy points out, *It just shows that we can never be complacent. Extinction can happen anywhere, at any time.* Published by Bloomsbury under the wing of editor, Jim Martin, and designed by Pete Hodgson and Paul Beer, *Extinct Boids* will, with thanks to all concerned, yield a proportion of its sale proceeds to *Ghosts of Gone Birds*, and to frontline conservation projects by local BirdLife Partners. The book is available from Bloomsbury:

<http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/extinct-boids-9781408178621/> Bloomsbury is also publishing 150 limited edition copies of *Extinct Boids*. Each one will be cloth bound, cased, signed by Ralph Steadman and Ceri Levy, and will include a signed and limited edition print of Steadman's Black Mamo *Drepanis funerea*, late of Molokai, Hawaii. For more information, please visit Bloomsbury: <http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/extinct-boids-9781408181409/> And by way of further background, the Ghosts of Gone Birds exhibition, curated by Ceri Levy, and Chris Aldhous of the creative agency, GOODPILOT, took place in the Rochelle School, Arnold

Circus, East London, throughout November 2011. For more information, see the [original story](#)
