

CENTRE FOR SENSORY STUDIES

MULTISENSORY MUSEOLOGY LECTURE SERIES



Island Imperial Pigeon,
New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea
[Cassin](#), J. 1862. Catalogue of Birds
Collected by the United States North Pacific
Surveying and. 14 312-328.

Box No 4, Birds: Making Kin and the Sensorial Bundles of the US North Pacific Exploring and Surveying Expedition (1853-56)

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Thursday, 10 October 2024

1:00-2:40 PM EST, [Webinar Registration Link](#)

Within this paper I examine bird specimens collected by Lt. Van Wyck in southern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea and the wider Pacific during the US North Pacific Expedition (1853-56). While Lt. Van Wyck went missing when the USS Porpoise disappeared on its homeward voyage, his bird specimens came to the Smithsonian Institution in Keg Number 5 via another transport. Interrogating the US North Pacific's surviving archival records and Lt Van Wyck's bird specimens, I seek to elucidate the human and nonhuman agencies involved in their collecting and the sensorial worlds they inhabit and helped animate. Discussing their trajectories once at the Smithsonian I track out the various purifications around the specimens that subsequently ensued. Doing so, I highlight the hidden labor of science, and the valuation of natural history specimens from New Guinea and Oceania as type specimens and as currency of exchange in the Smithsonian during the 19th century.

Dr. Joshua A. Bell is Curator of Globalization and Chair of the Anthropology Department at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. He recently co-edited *Naturalist Histories: Making Knowledge, Nature and People in Oceania* and *Linguistic and material intimacies of cell phones*.