

CALL FOR PAPERS

Nature's Past: Historical Perspectives on a Contested Concept

University College London
6th June 2017

Keynote speakers: Dr Sophie Page (UCL) and Dr Helen Cowie (University of York)

The concept of nature is increasingly questioned. A host of man-made processes- climate change, genetic engineering, the acidification of oceans, toxic pollution, diminishing biodiversity- seem to have dissolved old distinctions between the human and natural. The idea that we now live in the 'Anthropocene'- a new era of human dominance over ecology- has sparked debate among geologists, biologists, social scientists, humanists, artists, and policy-makers. This conference aims to place contemporary debates in historical context, exploring how historians engage with nature as an organizing concept, idea, and object of analysis. The interest in nature transcends many historical fields, from cultural to economic, ancient to the contemporary, microhistorical to global. We hope to foster discussion among historians with very different specialisms and methodologies. Among the questions we will consider: how and why have ideas about nature and the natural changed over time? What is the appropriate scale for nature's history? How should historians integrate cultural and materialist approaches to the history of nature? Is the Anthropocene a helpful concept for historians? What can a historical perspective add to contemporary environmental politics and policy-making?

We invite proposals for papers from postgraduate and early career researchers in history and related disciplines, particularly those which deal with:

- States, empires and nature
- History and the natural sciences
- Nature, religion and the supernatural
- Nature and human senses and emotions
- Human-animal relations in history
- The historicity of the concept of nature
- Nature and the history of geographical thinking
- The representation and display of nature
- Nature and capitalism

Please send abstracts of up to 300 words for a 20 minute paper presentation to uclpghistoryconf@gmail.com by April 28th, 2017.