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"Erasing the Extinct: The Hunt for Caribbean Monk Seals and Museum Collection Practices"

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The Caribbean monk seal (*Monachus tropicalis*), the only seal species native to Central America, was declared extinct in 2008, with the last confirmed sighting in 1952. This species historically had a broad range throughout the gulf of Mexico. This article discusses the history of Western science on the monk seal, from its first recorded sighting by a Western colonizer in 1492 to scientific collection in the 1800s and 1900s, as a history of the erasure of this species. Museum practices of collecting and displaying Caribbean monk seals have directly contributed to this erasure, and ways of writing a new history by giving the Caribbean monk seal the capacity to refuse erasure are suggested. (Abstract)

This article is a part of a supplement to and a special issue of the journal *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos,* concerning animal history. Read the full issue here .

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