

**RYAN FITZPATRICK / from Field Guide: a handbook for the
identification of extinct species in the wild**

Red Rail (*Aphanapteryx bonasia*) The sight of it is a target, a blanket one must wrap in the cries of nesting. One must make good an escape, a chase, a lure to falling plumage likewise peeled from any counterfeit. Chipping back from the meats of ease, of comfort, one should sit at the curved table of the hunt where depictions form crude vapours, pale pigments against a continental mist. What's left is a portrait of numbers, claiming failed dates. A curious sound precedes the chase. A pale determination that makes a palate from affect, rare in the settlements made around breeding. There is a line of guns and dogs that scrape the knife across the skin, projecting the failed performance of mystery on the body of what's left. One must dream in statistics, to the pins sunk into location, if one is to expect a meal.

Laughing Owl (*Sceloglaux albifacies*) If one opens a pocket, it may be picked. The coins will tickle the folds of the mantle, edged with snow that melts in a thought. A melancholy stroll marks the mewling notes of fabric as it shifts. A drifting rain weeps in an accordion's drawl. It is from a distance then that one scene unfolds across the frame of another and, now, can accommodate new populations that choke up little support. The past deposits little that stands firm in storms, little that flees to caves from madness. None in a pair will turn blind, but, fruitless, none will congregate in the trees, folded between the leaved shag of sight. One must carefully tease out the threads of outbound saddles following the well-rutted garden path. One must peel back the vivid hues of each summit to confirm the faint wastes in each trip. One must keep a careful vigil.