

The Sound of Silence

by
Ying-Xuan Lai
Illustrations by Kasia Nieżywińska



The
Sound
of Silence

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foreword



Does a clouded leopard happily rub his or her belly and say “yum” after a big dinner, just like us? Or does he or she “hiss!” when having a bad day? What sound does a clouded leopard make?

In this deeply compassionate book, Ying-Xuan Lai urges us to listen carefully and empathetically – not just with our ears, but with our hearts and mind – to the heartbeats of forests, the rhythm of flowers blooming, the outcry of endangered species, and the voices of children and their determination to protect the planet. Through Lucia and Lucius’ conservation expedition into the high

mountain habitats of Taiwan’s clouded leopards, Ying-Xuan shows us that listening is an empowering tactic that opens up space for interspecies communication and behavioral change. Rather than a sign of passivity, something as intangible and elusive as silence delivers messages about our natural world that are more powerful than numbers and data. In this sense, Ying-Xuan aligns herself with Lao Tzu, Rachel Carson and Disney’s Pocahontas, who demonstrate that the “sound of silence” is not an oxymoron but a reality that could be cared for with great sensibility.

A sequel to her award-winning *A Path to Life* (2018), *The Sound of Silence* is another book in which Lai reveals her affinity with felines. From the loss of leopard cat habitats to the near-extinction of clouded leopards, she moves from despair to bringing hope to a bleak future of mass extinction.

— *Shiuhhuah Serena Chou*
Associate Research Fellow, Academia Sinica, Taiwan

preface



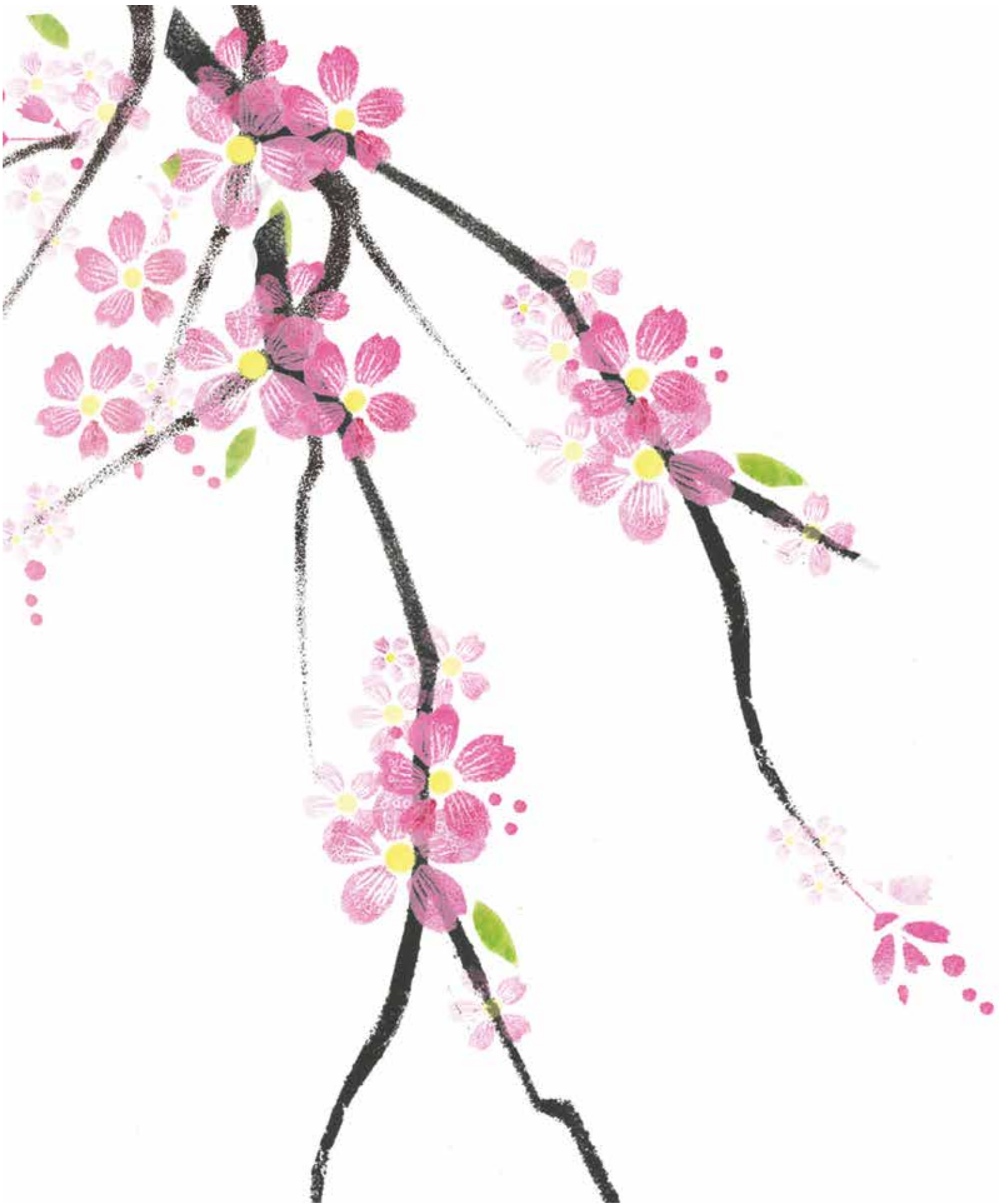
Formosan clouded leopards have many local names indicating a past connection with Taiwanese people. Names like camphor tree leopard or leaf leopard imply that leopards with large-leaf spots lived on camphor trees, which were once abundant in Taiwan's low-land forests. Taiwan's indigenous Rukai people called clouded leopards "Irikulau," who led their ancestors to migrate and settle down in a good place. Clouded leopards once lived with us.

In the past, we strove to live and used a lot of natural resources. Clouded leopards also struggled. But we may have been a bit greedier. Clouded leopards left us. The young Ying-Xuan's story reminds me of the past journey of searching for the last clouded leopard in Taiwan for nearly 20 years. Witnessing the sad disappearance of clouded leopards, I reflect on what we have taken from the forests. However, the story's elaboration seems to help me connect more with younger generations. I was deeply touched to see young people's imagination of mountains and forests, and their expectations for the future.

If you ask how I draw inspiration from this story, I think it is what we want for the Formosan clouded leopard and the next generation. The answer is HOPE! Salute to everyone who stands up to help the world and brings us hope for the future!

I highly recommend this book. Just follow the story using your heart and enjoy a journey of searching for clouded leopards.

— *Dr. Po-Jen Chiang, Ph.D.*
Clouded Leopard Reintroduction Initiative
Director, Formosan Wild Sound Conservation Science Center Co. Ltd.



prologue

A Soundless Beginning

The New Year comes silently to the world. Spring flowers sprout, summer fruit ripens, autumn leaves brown, and winter rains fall, all without a sound. Time passes, as does the interchange of life and death, neither knowing the existence of the other.

The winter vacation is over. Lucia and her brother, Lucius, are back at school. Life seems to be the same as before, but they both have a vague feeling that they are different from the past. Since they were last in school, the children have met and rescued endangered leopard cats and it changed them.

Lucia and her brother still visit the Endemic Species Research Institute (ESRI) to devote most of their free time to conservation activities for leopard cats. Pieces of good news came one after another. The outer ring road project, meant to preserve the leopard's habitat, started to be put into action after the completion of an environmental impact assessment. The Taichung International Flora Exposition that was held on the leopard cat's habitat had taken place, and local governments began to develop Leopard Cat Conservation Autonomy Regulations. The most exciting news of all was that leopard cats were found in the Bagua Mountains. This meant that their habitat was gradually expanding.

chapter 1

A Journey Full of Clues

One afternoon after school, Lucia decided to try out a new idea. She stretched out her index fingertip and skimmed over the many book titles in front of her in the library of her school. She wanted to see which one would call to her and stop her finger from moving on. To Lucia's surprise, it was never called on to stop. Suddenly, a ray of light coming through the window pointed to a book high in the corner of the bookshelf. Boosted up high by her brother and stretching her arm as high as she could, Lucia stood on her toes, reached up and took down a dusty book.





Lucia immediately sat down to read the book with Lucius. Soon, they were floating along the streams of the story. It was as if they had fallen into a dream. The children continued reading non-stop until the last period of the book. Lost in deep reflection about what she had just read, Lucia heard Lucius calling her back to reality. The afterglow of the setting sun was beginning to dissipate in the west and a catlike shadow appeared between the mist and the clouds. Lucia opened her eyes and tried to see the shadowy shape clearly, but the last glimmer of light had drifted quietly away.

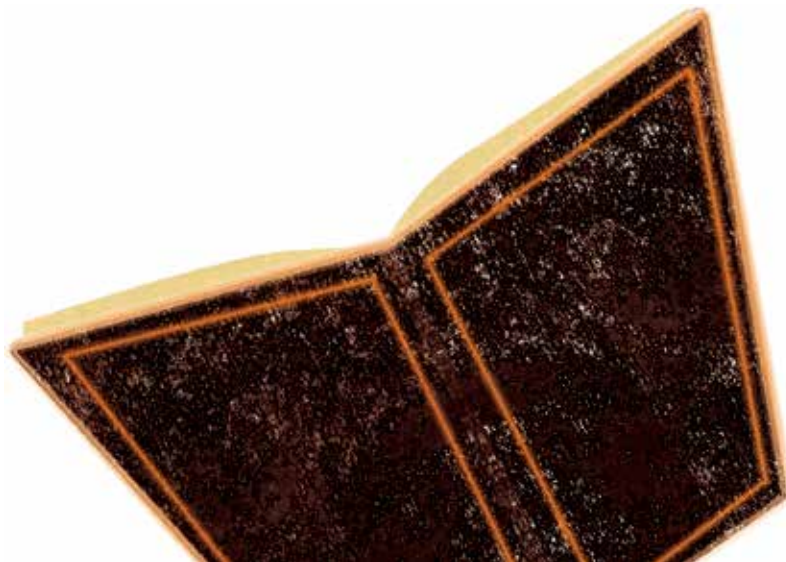


Over the next few days, Lucia would look up to the sky and hope that the clouds would reveal more to her. Lucius once asked, “Lucia, why are you always daydreaming?” She couldn’t explain it out loud, but it felt like the words of the book had spread into a sea of clouds and she was floating right in the middle of it.

Soon the weekend had come again, and Lucia and Lucius went to visit the ESRI as usual. A researcher suddenly asked them if they would like to go to Taipei to meet a “mysterious relative of the leopard cat”?

“Oh! So leopard cats have relatives!?! We definitely should meet them!” Lucius replied without thinking.

Lucius and Lucia didn’t expect that the decision they made would start a new journey full of clues as to the meaning of the mysterious storybook.



chapter 2

Mystery Tracks

Lucia and Lucius took a shuttle bus to the National Taiwan Museum in Taipei's 228 Park. Beside the towering ivory-white baroque exterior, two large banners fluttered in the wind. The researcher who accompanied them pointed to the picture on the banner. The banner announced that a special exhibition named *The Brave Fighter in Taiwan's forests: Formosan Clouded Leopard* was now being held inside the museum. "Oh, so that's the mystery relative of the leopard cat," Lucia said.



Lucius mused over the banner's title: "Clouded Leopard? Does it mean the leopard that lives in the clouds? What a poetic name!"

Lucia was stumped for a moment. Clouded Leopard! Wasn't that the character in the book that she discovered at the library a few days ago? The book said it was a mysterious animal that comes and goes like the wind. It was as elusive as the clouds and its movements were so vague that it appeared to shift about like a wafting mist through the mountains, and people just can't know of its whereabouts.



Lucia thought the clouded leopard was a mythical creature of ancient legends. How could it come to exist in this building? She rushed into the bright exhibition room, wanting to check it out as soon as possible. At the brightest and most spacious place in the room, six Formosan Clouded Leopards caught her eye. They were extremely lifelike, and it seemed as if they were going to pounce on her! She stopped to make sure they weren't going to attack. But when her gaze met theirs, she found their eyes empty and lifeless. The dull eyes told her the truth: they were only preserved specimens from the past, not living cats. Her fright was suddenly replaced by sadness.

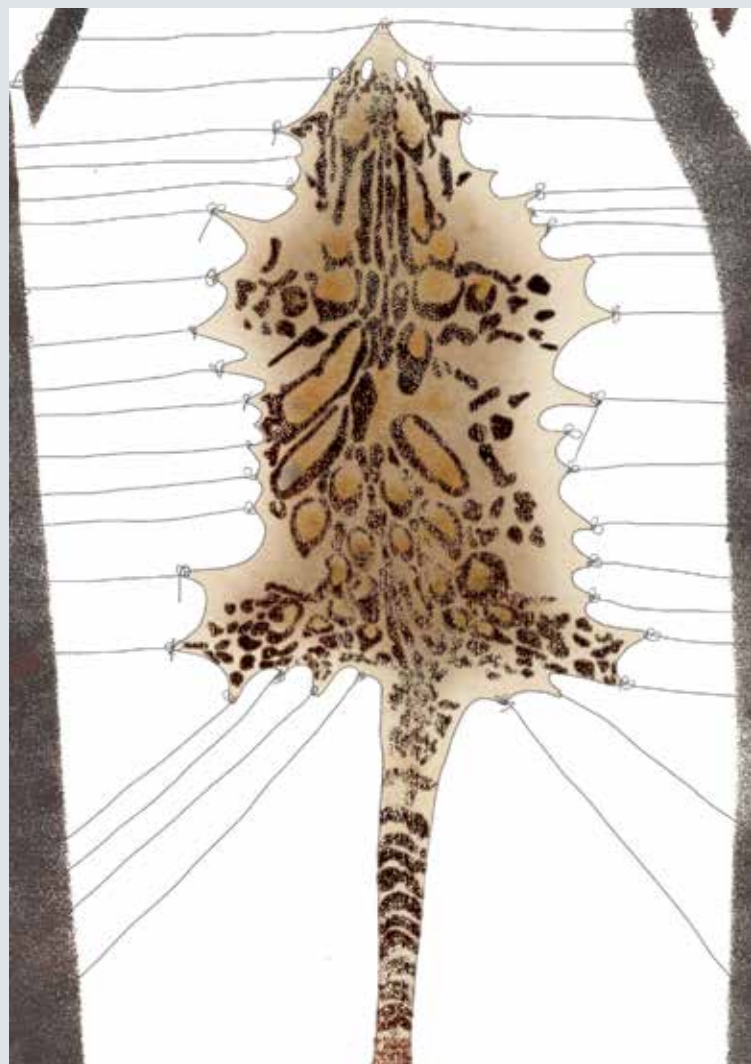




The six clouded leopards on display included two adults, one juvenile, and two small cubs. Lucia couldn't bear to see them and turned her head away. She had no idea how to calm down and settle her emotions. Trying to move on, she went to read the words written on the display board.

“The Formosan clouded leopard is a unique subspecies of Taiwan and one of the largest wild animals in Taiwan. Being a carnivorous species, it would wait huddled in a tree to ambush its prey by flying down from the branches and swooping onto its victim.

Some of Taiwan's indigenous communities regarded the clouded leopard as the spirit of their ancestors and it was worshipped as a god. They also used clouded leopard teeth to make ornaments, while its skin was used to make clothing or decorations as a symbol of courage. But in modern times, people from the plains with firearms began to hunt the clouded leopards. Eventually, because of overhunting, it became difficult for the clouded leopard to survive.”





Although these explanations shined some light on the questions in Lucia's mind, they also left more shadows. She learned that the animal is not called the 'clouded leopard' because it lives in the clouds. It is because of the large blocks of beautiful cloud patterns that adorn both sides of the animal's body. It is one of the most beautiful cats to look at and it is also a rare and unique subspecies of Taiwan.

The destiny of the clouded leopard was similar to that of the leopard cat. People coveted its fur and hunted it mercilessly without consideration for the future survival of the species. People also never considered how the development of land posed a great threat to the cat's habitat and existence.

Lucia's heart sank as she read the last paragraph of the exhibit's informational placard. It said: "After 13 years of investigation by ecological research and looking at more than 1,500 automatic camera images that had been installed in the mountains of Taiwan, it was found that no evidence has been capture of the clouded leopard's existence today. It is speculated that Taiwan's clouded leopard may have become extinct."



“Might be extinct,” Lucia repeated to herself. The quantity of Taiwanese leopard cats had been dismally small, but there were still three to four hundred remaining in the wild! Lucia thought there had to be opportunities to restore the clouded leopard species and preserve their rightful habitat within the mountains of Taiwan.

It was unbelievable to Lucia that the absolutely fabulous clouded leopard cat had become extinct. It was such an important species! She felt helpless and wordless. She did not want to accept that they had gone away and there was no chance for them to reappear.



chapter 3

The Spirit in the Mountain

After returning home from Taipei, Lucia spent almost all her time after school in the library. She reread the book about the clouded leopard, remembering when it called to her from high up on the shelf, glimmering like a shining jewel. Was it karma?

Perhaps it was meant to disclose some important information to her.

Lucia opened the book and fell into the clouded leopard's mythological dream.

Auspicious clouds rolled out from the pages, and the clouded leopard floated down through the shadows. A Rukai elder appeared wearing an eagle feathered crown and clothing decorated with many glass beads. He said to Lucia, "In ancient times, animals were all white without stripes. The Taiwanese clouded leopard and the Taiwan black bear were the best of friends."





Lucia pondered his words for a moment and then asked, “How did they change colours?”

The elder replied, “They decided to decorate each other. The black bear’s drawing skill was superb, and it designed beautiful clouds upon the surface of the clouded leopard cat.”

“We of the Paiwan tribe love and respect the markings of the clouded leopard. Only the leader and nobles can keep and wear its fur.”

A Paiwan hunter was also present. “We call the clouded leopard ‘Rikulau,’ which means sacred. Our ancestors came from abroad. They rowed kayaks to the east coast of Taiwan, but couldn’t find a proper place to settle down. One day, a clouded leopard and a mountain hawk eagle with the air of a king approached our ancestors. The two animals guided them to the Tamari River. After crossing many mountains, the clouded leopard suddenly refused to go forward and the mountain eagle soared away up into the sky. Our ancestors set up a pillar in the place where the clouded leopard stopped and used it as the tribe’s birthplace. It was there that they established the ‘Kochapongan tribe,’” the Paiwan hunter explained.



“What does ‘Kochapongan’ mean?” Lucia asked the hunter.

“It means the homeland of the clouded leopard!” The Paiwan hunter replied with great emotion. “We are the representatives of the clouded leopard. The clouded leopard is our ancestral spirit. We never go hunting in the sacred land where the clouded leopards appear. The clouded leopard must not be disturbed. We believe that if you accidentally kill the clouded leopard, your offspring will become deaf or mute.”



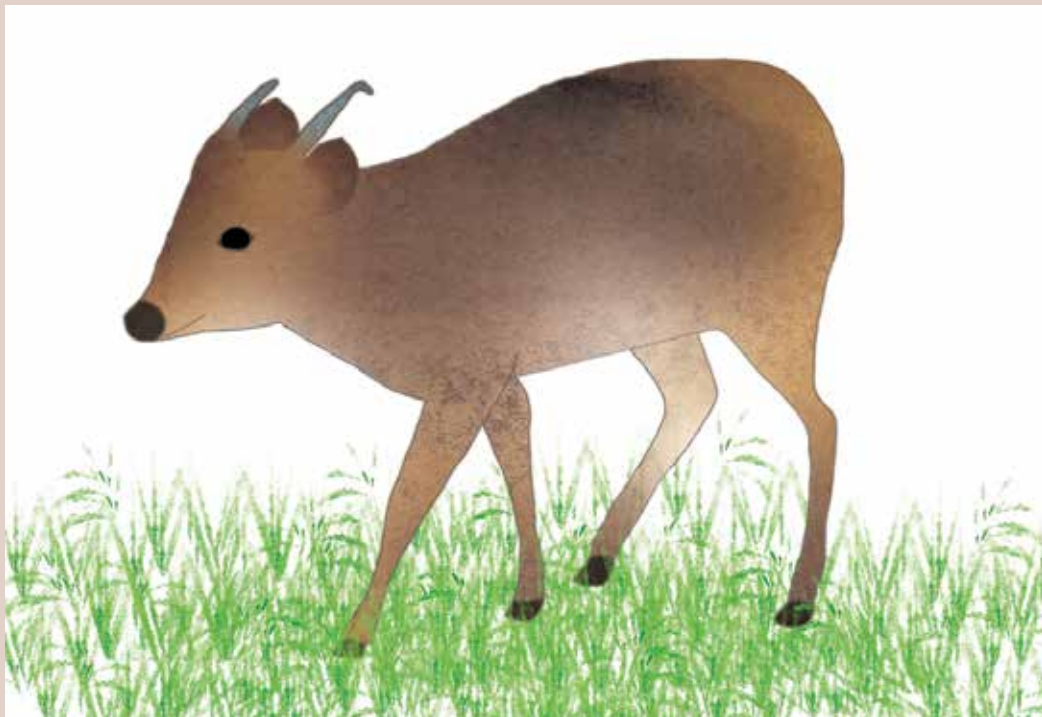
The Paiwan hunter and the Rukai elder disappeared into the clouds with the clouded leopard. Slowly, Lucia regained consciousness of her surroundings. She felt as if she were waking up from a dreamland. It turned out that because the clouded leopard was so revered, and a deep fear of harming the animals was instilled in the aboriginals, the clouded leopard was sure to prosper and survive. The respect that the aboriginals had for the clouded leopard was very important to Lucia and she eagerly shared this newfound knowledge with her brother.



The siblings frantically searched for records of the clouded leopards in the library and on the Internet. They did not miss any clues or leave any stones unturned. They found that a piece of jade totem unearthed in the Puyuma Relics proved that the clouded leopards existed from as far back as 3,000 years ago. The Book of Sui, published in the year 625, mentioned that Taiwanese aboriginals were clothed in clouded leopard leathers.

Another book, *Daoyi Zhilüe*, published in the year 1349, stated that the leathers of the clouded leopard, the Formosan sika deer, and the Formosan barking deer had been traded with China.

The children went on to find other important books in their research. Robert Swinhoe, the United Kingdom's ambassador to Taiwan who was also a naturalist, sent specimens of clouded leopards which he received from aboriginals to the Natural History Museum in London. He also introduced them in his book, *The Misunderstood History of Taiwan: 1861-1949*. Japanese naturalist Kano Tadao and anthropologist Mori Ushinosuke both wrote about the clouded leopard. This was a very interesting discovery since the specimens the children saw in the National Taiwan Museum were collected during the period that the Japanese ruled Taiwan.



Lucia was inspired by how vividly the clouded leopard lived in the legends of the indigenous people. The beautiful, black, cloud-like streaks that decorated the animals enriched the forests of Taiwan. She pictured the clouded leopard lying relaxed in the canopy layer of the jungle. Lucia knew the clouded leopard still lingered in the hearts of the indigenous people who inhabited the lush forests of Taiwan.

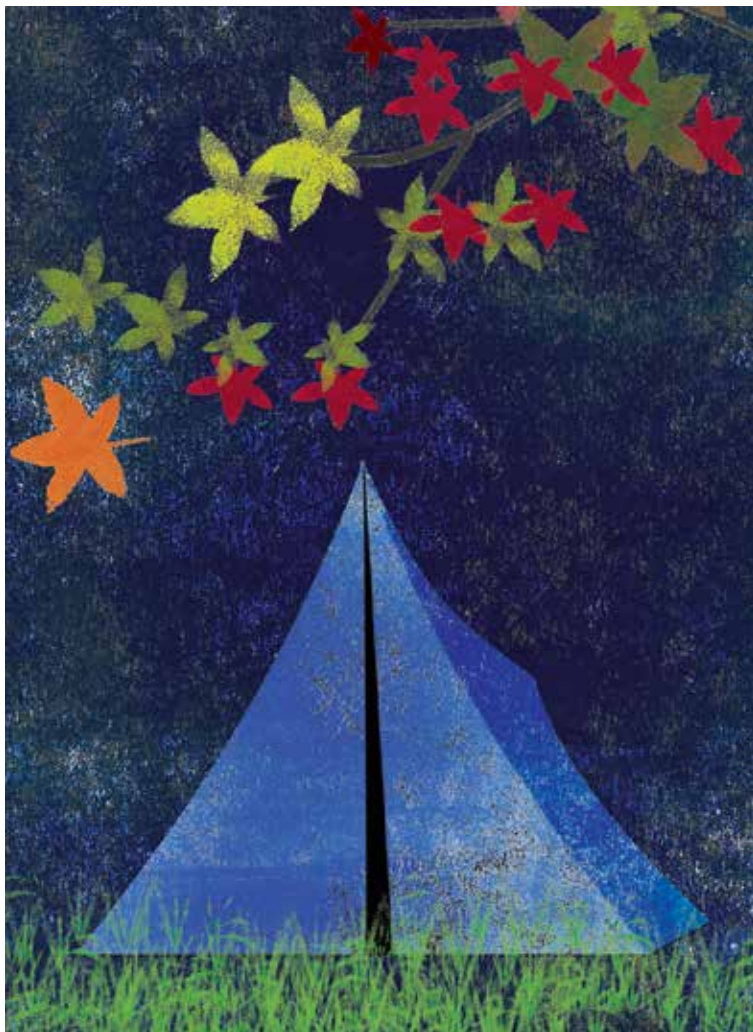


chapter 4

Somewhere Deep in the Clouds

If no one has seen the clouded leopard in decades, can it be concluded that the leopards are extinct? The researcher at the ESRI told Lucia and Lucius that according to international practice, a species would be claimed extinct only if it had not been spotted for a period of over 50 years. The last record of a wild clouded leopard sighting in Taiwan was in 1983. It was a young leopard that fell into a trap. This meant that there had been no formal records of wild clouded leopards for over 34 years. The whereabouts of clouded leopards had become a mystery, but there were also researchers who hadn't given up hope that one day they could again record the activities of Taiwan's clouded leopards.

Lucius refused to believe that the clouded leopard was extinct. He said to Lucia, “If there are so many leopard stories told by the Paiwan and Rukai tribes, then that should be proof that the clouded leopards were very closely connected to their lives. According to them, the clouded leopard’s movements were incredibly quick, too quick to be seen by people. Maybe they are still hiding within the mountains and forests and are just invisible and untraceable to humans.”





An idea flashed through Lucia’s mind. The Paiwan and Rukai tribes mainly settled on Dawu Mountain, south of the Central Mountain Range. If the children were to go there, perhaps they could find clues pointing to the survival of the clouded leopard. Lucia pleaded with the research staff of the ESRI, “Please, take us to Dawu Mountain. We have ears like a cat and eyes like a hawk – maybe we can find evidence of clouded leopards!”

The staff looked at them sceptically and said, “Are you really able to climb mountains wearing a very heavy backpack filled with food, water and supplies, crossing summits and rivers for several days? It won’t be convenient to take a bath in the evening or go the toilet whenever you want. We must sleep in a mountain hut or in a pitched tent. Can you promise to never complain of feeling worn out?”

“You have our word,” the children answered without hesitation.

The bargain was struck. Together, the group took a long drive to Pingtung County, formed a team with researchers from the Pingtung University of Science and Technology, and departed for the Dawu Mountain Nature Reserve.





Standing at the foot of the Dawu Mountain, Lucius saw a rich broad-leaved forest. It looked as if glossy green hair were wrapped around the rolling hills. But when the group walked through the wooded country, the scene started to change. The hillsides had been developed, and the native forests were replaced with alpine vegetables, recreational farms, and bed and breakfasts. The higher they went, the glossy green became thinner and thinner, sometimes even bare.

The children were reminded of the severe damage caused by Typhoon Morakot in 2009. Several houses and school buildings toppled down after torrential rains had triggered landslides. Many aboriginal people had been forced to abandon their homes and leave their hometowns.

For decades, humans had cut down trees in order to occupy the habitats of clouded leopards, causing them and other indigenous animals to be displaced. At the same time, this made the soil toxic. The heavy rainfall caused huge portions of the mountainside to collapse, causing catastrophic mudslides. Lucia wondered how humans could cause such devastating harm, and she thought of all the people and animals who had suffered as a result.





The intensity of the trip was totally unforeseen to the children. They felt dead on their feet after backpacking over hills and around lakes. They felt frozen in the evening, as the mountain wind chilled them to the bone. They always woke up at dawn, already cold and damp before beginning their walk. By noon, Lucia felt sore all over; the tingling pain started from the heels of her feet and radiated to her knees. There was no relief from the weight of the luggage on her back. But since the children had asked to join the hard journey, they knew they could only grit their teeth, endure the pain, and struggle onwards.

The worst thing of all was that after walking day after day, the clouded leopard never appeared. Nonetheless, the children met with elders of aboriginal tribes who promised with certainty that they had seen the clouded leopard. A chieftain proudly told them that his grandfather had seen five clouded leopards in total! The children went to visit the grey-haired grandfather and asked him if the clouded leopard was still alive. He refused to respond positively, and only sighed: “The forest is getting noisier and noisier!”

The grandfather’s mysterious declaration had them scratching their heads. Noisier and noisier — did this that mean that one could not hear the footsteps of the clouded leopard? “Why is the forest noisier?” they wondered.

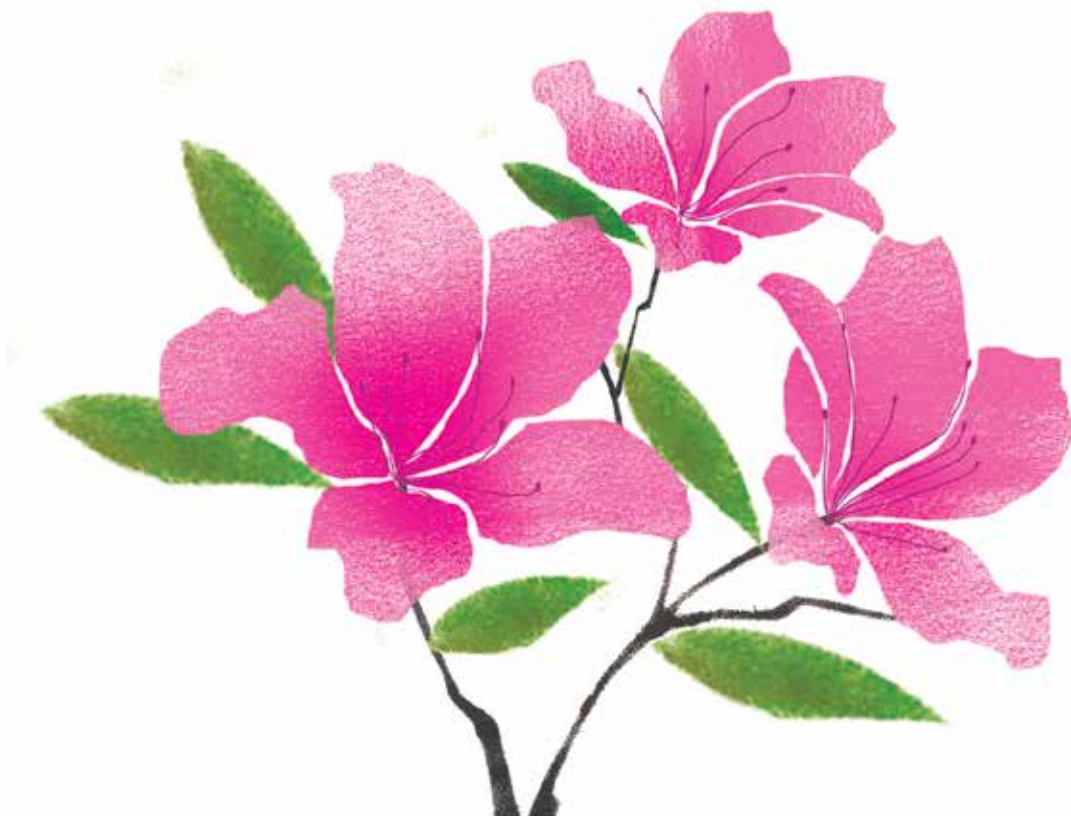


Lucia and Lucius asked the research staff of the ESRI what they thought the old man had meant. They said: “In the past, the forests were denser than they are now, and the thicker wooded areas created a variety of hiding places for animals. Now we often hear the sounds of chainsaws cutting trees and the clank and crash of construction. We even pick up on the hum of air conditioning sounds. Indeed, it is noisier.”

Lucius asked, “Does the noisier forest make it more difficult to hear the sounds that originally existed here?”

The researcher nodded, “That’s right! In recent years, we found that even bird sounds were difficult to capture on tape.”

The researchers told Lucia and Lucius that a multitude of different animals could be heard communicating in their recordings. In the past, they could track the voices of squirrels, Formosan Macaques, Formosan Barking Deer, and Formosan Yellow-throated Martens – even the chatter between a family of crab-eating mongeese was caught on tape!



The group continued their hike in the azalea forest of Northern Dawu Mountain. Many blooming trees absorbed the sun's rays, and everything looked green and luxuriant. The staff asked Lucia and Lucius to drop their bags, sit down and close their eyes, keeping as quiet as possible. "Listen to the surroundings," they instructed. Lucia found that when using only her ears, like tiny doors to the outside world, she became very sensitive to movements and sounds. In fact, many sounds that could not be heard with open eyes could now be heard when her eyes were closed. A Formosan Yellow-throated Martens stepped on dead leaves then ran away; a Formosan white-faced squirrel jumped between trees; the wind whispered through the tree-tops and the pine trees dropped cones onto the forest floor. Lucia imagined that the earth was trying to communicate by speaking through the trees. She discovered that only when one opens one's ears can one listen to the heartbeat of the forest.





chapter 5

Listen to the Rhythm of Life

After their trip, Lucius and Lucia decided to start a new initiative in order to track the whereabouts of animal species in Taiwan's forests. The ESRI researchers suggested that they refer to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a starting point to inspire their project. Lucia and Lucius immediately connected with Goal 15: Life on Land. The aim of Goal 15 was *to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.*

Recalling their profound experience listening to the sounds of the forest with the ESRI researchers, Lucia and Lucius decided to create a program called “Sound of Endless Sound: Listen to the Sounds of the Forest.” They called on children in their community to form a Youth Sound Recording Team to set up an animal linguistic database for sounds recorded in the forest. Lucia and Lucius thought that if it was possible to monitor changes in the sounds of the forest over a long period of time using the voices of the animals, it might possible to solve the mystery of whether the clouded leopard still existed.





Lucia and Lucius visited Pingtung again during summer vacation. During the day, they conducted their investigations. At night, they slept on the ground floor inside the old Taiwu Elementary School. The school building was abandoned due to landslides during the Morakot disaster. After some twists and turns and many fundraising efforts, a new school building was built in the relocated village. There were many Paiwan children studying in the school and they had beautiful voices. The Ancient Ballads Troupe became very famous and even performed on the same stage with the King's Choir! The Troupe members were very excited to hear of Lucia and Lucius' plan, and decided to include the sounds of animals collected by the Youth Sound Recording Team in their song. They named the song "Where the Harmony Started to Whisper."



Lucia and Lucius also started to record an oral history of the clouded leopard by interviewing the native people. They visited many elders and hunters from the aboriginal tribes and asked them to share their memories of any encounters they had with clouded leopards. The purpose was to record factual first-hand testimonies of people who knew the habits of the clouded leopards, not only myths or legends.

Many months later, Lucia and Lucius were visiting the mountain when an elder told them that he had seen one clouded leopard by a stream and another climbing down from a tree. He said that due to public awareness of nature conservation promoted by the government and Lucia and Lucius' own project, the number of Formosan Sambar Deer and Formosan Yellow-throated Martens had been increasing. Naturally, there would be a time lag between the growth in population of plant-eating animals and flesh-eating animals, and the clouded leopard as an umbrella species might have a chance to appear again. He also reminded them of the possibility that clouded leopards may have moved to remote mountains peaks or mountains further north.



The words of the elder cheered Lucia and Lucius. At that moment they came to deeply appreciate the value of their project: they realized that many messages are silent because no one wants to listen. Too many people enjoy talking for talking's sake, but it is more important for people to hear the words of others and the sounds of nature. Listening is an act that seems to be silent, but in actuality it breaks silence. It is also a form of dealing with the world in an honest manner, by opening the ear and the heart for sincere voices flowing into the mind.

After countless hours of hard work, Lucia and Lucius and their Youth Sound Recording Team completed mapping the sounds of the Taiwanese forests. Their comprehensive database comprised of over 300 animal sounds. Their efforts would not only save these voices for the future, but also allow more people to access the sounds of insects, birds, and other animals through accessible Internet resources.



epilogue

Listening as an Action of Hope

They haven't been able to record the clouded leopards yet, but Lucia and Lucius are not disappointed and will not give up. They know that without action, the world will not change. Although Taiwan is a small island of 36,000 square kilometres, it has an altitude of 4,000 meters and covers tropical, temperate, and sub-frigid climate zones. For two million years, it has experienced four major glacial and interglacial periods. There are eight vegetation zones with abundant indigenous species, including over 4,000 kinds of vascular plants and more than 80 mammals. It could be called Noah's Ark for its role in protecting species against climate change and hosting biogenic migration in the northern hemisphere.



But Taiwan's land, like all land on Earth, has limited capacity. When it is destroyed, people will become the next victims. Lucia and Lucius hope that through their own efforts, people will be called upon to change their habits and enjoy the tranquillity of the forest rather than noise and confusion created by humankind. The siblings hope that, if people learn to see and hear the beauty of the land, they will realise how important it is to ensure that their living habits can sustain a safe and happy future for all beings.



about the author



Ying-Xuan Lai is currently a student at Taipei Li-shan High School. She became fascinated with wildlife and nature when she first attended a training course called “Project ECO” at Xihu Elementary School.

Her first pictorial artwork, “Meet the White Dolphin,” won the Excellence Award in the 2013 Nationwide Students’ Picture Book Creation Competition. It is an adventure story about a white dolphin and Ama, a female fisher who collects seafood for a living. She also won the Bronze prize in the 2015 Voices of Future Generations International Writing Contest with “Tales of the Waves at Lanyu,” which describes how the indigenous people of Taiwan manage the conservation of marine resources. Ying-Xuan continues to create more stories and artwork with her unique viewpoint concerning environmental issues. In her Voices of Future Generations Gold Award winning story, “A Path to Life,” she superbly deals with the issue of mutual dependence between animals and humans, and demonstrates how all exist in the same bio-community.

Ying-Xuan is not only concerned with environmental issues, she also concerns herself greatly with human rights issues. She leads teams of school classmates to investigate children’s rights and the rights of disadvantaged people in her country of Taiwan. Her theses: “Let’s Play a Song Together with Black Keys and White Keys” and “The Missing Pieces” won the Excellence Award from the Thesis Writing Competition of the Northern County of Taiwan in 2014 and 2016, respectively. She gave a speech at the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biodiversity in Mexico in 2016 and a TEED talk for the Taiwanese “Children, Environment and Sustainable Development” forum, she joined “The Dialogues of Climate Generations” forum during the Taipei International Book Exhibition in 2017, and she gave a speech during the International Learning Circle on Children’s Rights & the World’s Sustainable Development Goals in London in 2018.

In 2019, she shared her work with groups of artists and researchers at the International Conference on Critical Food Studies at Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

This is her second book for the Voices of Future Generations Children's Book Series. Ying-Xuan is a young author who cares about animals and the environment in which we live together, and she will continue her story about animal rights and how to connect to the meaning of life.

about the illustrator



Kasia Nieżywińska was born in Poland and moved to the UK some 25 years ago. Her background is in mathematics. She has worked as a teacher, a computer programmer and recently as a freelance illustrator. Her special interest is in creating images for children's books. She qualified with a MA Degree in Children's Book Illustration from Ruskin University in Cambridge. The ideas for her work come predominantly from her childhood memories, through which she recalls and sometimes her own imaginary adventures. She loves telling stories and illustrating them.



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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

All children are holders of important human rights. Twenty-five years ago in 1989, over a hundred countries agreed on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the most important human rights treaty in history, they promised to protect and promote all children's equal rights, which are connected and equally important.

In the 54 Articles of the Convention, countries make solemn promises to defend children's needs and dreams. They recognize the role of children in realizing their rights, which requires that children be heard and involved in decision-making. In particular, Article 24 and Article 27 defend children's rights to safe drinking water, good food, a clean and safe environment, health, and quality of life. Article 29 recognizes children's rights to education that develops personality, talents and potential, respecting human rights and the natural environment.

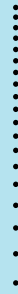
— *Dr. Alexandra Wandel*
World Future Council



Voices of Future Generations Children's Book Series



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THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development Goals Statement

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a bridge from the previous Millennium Development Goals adopted by the international community in 2000 to the future. Construction of this bridge began in 2012 at the United Nations Rio+ 20 Conference on Sustainable Development. At this Conference, countries agreed that it was time to take concrete action for the present and the future by acting on issues such as climate change, poverty, inequality and biodiversity. This resulted in *The Future We Want*, a global statement of priorities and responsibilities for countries toward the people, environment, biodiversity and future.

In 2015, the bridge took shape in the form of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which countries agreed to implement between 2015 and 2030. The SDGs, as they are commonly called, comprise a set of 17 specific goals, over 160 targets within these goals, and hundreds of indicators to measure if the goals and targets are being met. The SDGs address the key issues that face our world community now and that will define this community in the future, such as poverty, climate change, education rights, gender equality, discrimination, health, food and water access and safety, and the promotion of justice for all members of society. Since 2015, children around the world have joined in efforts to incorporate the SDGs in their countries and communities, adding their voices and perspectives as future leaders. The SDGs show the power of all people, including children, to create positive and lasting change that addresses the needs of local and global society.

— *Dr. Alexandra R. Harrington*
Centre for International Sustainable Development Law



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Thanks and Inspiring Resources

'Voices of Future Generations' International Commission

Warmest thanks to the International Commission, launched in 2014 by His Excellency Judge CG Weeramantry, UNESCO Peace Education Research Award Laureate, which supports, guides and profiles this new series of Children's Books Series, including: Ms. Alexandra Wandel (WFC), Prof. Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger (CISDL), Dr Kristiann Allen (New Zealand), Ms. Irina Bokova (Former Director-General UNESCO), Ms. Emma Hopkin / Ms. Hannah Rolls (UK), Ms. Julia Marton-Lefevre (IUCN), Dr James Moody (Australia), Prof. Kirsten Sandberg (UN CRC Chair), Judge Marcel Szabo (Hungary), Dr Christina Voigt (Norway), Dr Alexandra Harrington (CISDL).

'Voices of Future Generations' Goodwill Ambassadors and VoFG Team

Most sincere appreciation to HH Sheikha Hissa Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum (ELF / Middle East), Dr Ying-Shih Hsieh (EQPF / Asia), Dr Gabrielle Sacconaghi-Bacon (Moore Foundation / North America), Ms. Monique Gray Smith (First Nations of Canada), Ms. Melinda Manuel (PNG), Dr Odeeth Lara-Morales (VoFG), Ms. Chiara Rohlfs (VoFG), Ms. Sarah Sanders (VoFG).

The World Future Council consists of 50 eminent global changemakers from across the globe. Together, they work to pass on a healthy planet and just societies to our children and grandchildren. (www.worldfuturecouncil.org)

United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) strives to build networks among nations that enable humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity by mobilizing for education, building intercultural understanding, pursuing scientific cooperation, and protecting freedom of expression. (<https://en.unesco.org/>)

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the body of 18 independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its three Optional Protocols, by its State parties. (www.ohchr.org)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. (www.unep.org)

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) envisions a just world that values and conserves nature, working to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. (www.iucn.org)

Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL) supports understanding, development and implementation of law for sustainable development by leading legal research through scholarship and dialogue and facilitating legal education through teaching and capacity-building. (www.cisd.org)

Environmental Quality Protection Foundation (EQPF) established in 1984 is the premier ENGO in Taiwan. Implementing environmental education, tree plantation, and international participation through coordinating transdisciplinary resources to push forward environmental and sustainable development in our time.

World's Largest Lesson (WLL) World's Largest Lesson brings the Global Goals to children all over the world and unites them in taking action. Since it was launched in September 2015, the World's Largest Lesson has reached over 130 countries and impacted over 8 million children each year. (<https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>)

Emirates Literature Foundation, home of the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature is a not-for-profit non-governmental organisation that supports and nurtures a love of literature in the UAE and across the region through a programme of varied cultural initiatives. Recognising the distinctive contribution that literature makes to children's lives, the Foundation focuses on introducing and cultivating a spirit of reading while acting as a catalyst for writing and cultural exchange. (<https://www.elfdubai.org/en/home>)



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About the 'Voices of Future Generations' Series

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Voices of Future Generations Children's Book Series, led by the United Nations and a consortium of educational charities including the World Future Council (WFC), the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL), the Environmental Quality Protection Foundation (EQPF), the Fundacion Ecos and the Trust for Sustainable Living (TSL) among others, as well as the Future Generations Commissioners of several countries, and international leaders from the UN Division for Sustainable Development, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and other international organizations, has launched the new Voices of Future Generations Series of Children's Books.

Every year we feature stories from our selected group of child authors, inspired by the outcomes of the Earth Summit, the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) and the world's Sustainable Development Goals, and by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) itself. Our junior authors, ages 8-12, are concerned about future justice, poverty, the global environment, education and children's rights. Accompanied by illustrations, each book profiles creative, interesting and adventurous ideas for creating a just and greener future, in the context of children's interests and lives.

We aim to publish the books internationally in ten languages, raising the voices of future generations and spread their messages for a fair and sustainable tomorrow among their peers and adults, worldwide. We welcome you to join us in support of this inspiring partnership, at www.vofg.org.

Are there any kinds of animals or plants that are reportedly extinct in the place you live? Do you believe it? If not, are you willing to search for them? How will you do it? The hope to find them might just reside in the desire to hear from them again.

Hsieh Ying-Shih,

Chairman, Environmental Quality Protection Foundation

Nowadays, there have been various activities dedicated to preserving biodiversity across the globe. Written in a voice that is both sophisticated and vivacious, this book depicts the figures that have made great efforts for this cause in Taiwan. The will to act and the power of intuition that are characteristic of children are demonstrated in this book.

Sutou Takeru,

Editor of Children's Books, Iwanami Shoten

We have long admired Ying-Xuan for being such an inspiring, prolific young writer. We are even more in awe as she continues to raise a quiet but righteous voice to increase public awareness of the plight of felines in Taiwan.

Woven from both mythological and factual accounts of the clouded leopard, *The Sound of Silence* offers the reader a glimpse of the mysterious animal which was declared extinct in 2013. Such tragedy, however, should not only be a cause for despair. Ying-Xuan's story opens up a space for cultural discovery and scientific exploration, for remembering and understanding, thereby allowing wisdom to arise from the ashes of extinction.

Open the book now! Let Ying-Xuan's words transport you to Taiwan. You will be amazed to see the mesmerizing world of the Formosan clouded leopard.

Houng Ling Chiou and Li Jung Cho

Director of Project ECO and Teacher of Project Eco

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