

HIDE AND SEEK: THE SEARCH FOR THE FORMOSAN CLOUDED LEOPARD

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* Illustrations from this picture book were featured in the 2022 Bologna Illustrators Exhibition

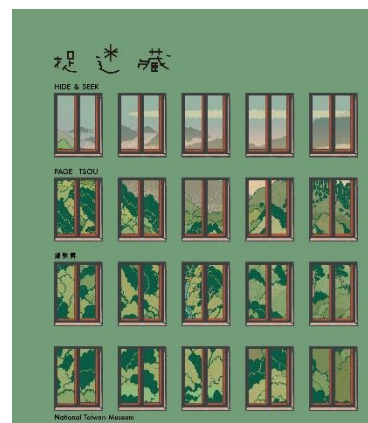
Two naturalists over a hundred years apart both scoured the deep forests of Taiwan in search of a mysterious creature: the Formosan clouded leopard.

The Formosan clouded leopard is considered a sacred animal by some indigenous Taiwanese cultures. However, the leopards are rarely seen and little trace of them remains. In 1856, a British diplomat and naturalist called Robert Swinhoe arrived in Taiwan, but he left without seeing a live clouded leopard despite years of searching. Over a hundred years later, ecological researcher Chiang Po-jen was intrigued by the Formosan clouded leopard and has devoted his life to finding one. Are the leopards still out there, hidden deep in the Taiwanese mountains?

Working with the National Taiwan Museum, Page Tsou brings his artistic vision to the nature findings and the once prominent but now extinct Formosan clouded leopard. Open this picture book and join the naturalists on a journey spanning more than a century as they search for the legendary clouded leopard.

Page Tsou 鄒駿昇

Born and raised in Taichung, Page Tsou is a picture book illustrator, visual artist, and art curator. He graduated from the Royal College of Art in London and is currently the art director of Auspicious Studio.



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He is also the curator of Visual Taipei and the Taiwan Pavilion at the Bologna Children's Book Fair and Frankfurt Book Fair.

His artwork has been featured in the Bologna Illustrators Exhibition five times, and he has won many prizes including the International Award for Illustration (awarded by Fundación SM, part of Spanish publisher Grupo SM), as well as a special mention for the Bologna Ragazzi Award and best of show at the 3x3 International Illustration Awards.

HIDE AND SEEK: THE SEARCH FOR THE FORMOSAN CLOUDED LEOPARD

Translated by Helen Wang

p.6-7

In the past, there was a British man who lived in Taiwan for a long time. His name was Robert Swinhoe. He arrived quietly in Taiwan one morning in spring. It was hotter and more humid than he had imagined...

p.8-9

As well as being a diplomat, Swinhoe was also a naturalist. He had a keen interest in the natural world and human activity in Taiwan. He frequently observed this land silently from a distance looking for interesting things.

p.10-11

One day, he was walking in a mountain forest, when the scene before him suddenly caught his eye. Two indigenous people were sitting chatting in front of a stone slab house. The skins they were wearing were magnificent and mesmerizing, with a pattern that Swinhoe had never seen before.

For some indigenous people, the clouded leopard is a symbol of home. It is a sacred and very rare animal, so a forest where a clouded leopard appears is considered protected by the gods. The clouded leopard is from the ancient culture of the indigenous people, and also part of their lives.

p.12-13

The clouded leopard is very good at hiding itself in the forest, and its tracks are seldom seen by humans, and for this reason Swinhoe was even more eager to see one with his own eyes. So, after that, he often wove through the green forests, looking for tracks of the clouded leopard, and at the same time discovering many interesting animals. For example, the Formosan black bear, the Formosan green pigeon, the Formosan macaque and the Formosan hill partridge.

p.14-15

Swinhoe sent the animals he had discovered and carefully researched and classified in Taiwan back to Britain, where they were drawn and recorded by professional illustrators, and published in international journals, so that more people could learn about them.

So, although no live clouded leopards were found, they came to life through the printed works.

p.16-17

Because of a work transfer, Swinhoe left Taiwan in the summer of 1866. He never did find a clouded leopard.

p.18-19

Several decades later, the Japanese prepared beautiful specimens of the animals that Swinhoe had seen, and some he had not seen, in the mountain forests, and these later became a precious collection of the National Taiwan Museum.

p.20-21

Swinhoe never returned to Taiwan, and talk of “The Search for the Clouded Leopard” gradually came to an end.

p.22-23

Over a hundred years later, a young man called Chiang Po-jen came on the scene. He was working for a tech company, and is now an ecological researcher. One ordinary afternoon, a pattern in the grass caught his attention. It was a foreign species of clouded leopard, and he was captivated by its gorgeous patterning.

p.24-25

From then on, searching for a Formosan clouded leopard became his mission in life, and going in and out of the mountain forests became his daily routine.

p.26-27

Modern technology has broken through many limitations of the past, offering countless possibilities and hope. Chiang Po-jen set up cameras throughout Taiwan in every place that a clouded leopard might pass through, each camera offering a kind of hope.

p.28-29

After thousands of days spent weaving through the forests, and several thousands of photographs, almost every kind of wild animal living in the mountains of Taiwan was caught on film. He discovered that there was more prey for the clouded leopard than before, which made him feel he was getting closer and closer to the clouded leopard.

p.30-31

With this hope, whenever the weather allowed, Chiang Po-jen went cheerfully into the mountain forests.

p.32-33

After several days, he would come out of the forest, exhausted. Occasionally he would glance back, as though he felt a clouded leopard was watching him.

p.34-35

Time passed quickly, and after more than a decade, the landscape changed.

With some sadness, Chiang Po-jen decided to solemnly declare: "The clouded leopard has already completely disappeared from the mountain forests of Taiwan."

p.36-37

However... every now and then, there is news of a "possible sighting of the clouded leopard".

FURTHER READING

Robert Swinhoe (1836-1877)

Robert Swinhoe was a British diplomat and scholar.

In 1861 he became British Vice Consul in Taiwan, the first foreign diplomat on the island. His keen interest in natural history led him to collect and study as many creatures as possible. He was the first person in Taiwan to collect systematically on a large scale.

He collected and published 227 species of birds, almost 40 species of mammals, 246 plants, over 200 land snails and freshwater crustaceans, over 400 insects, and a number of amphibians, fish and invertebrates. In recognition of his contribution, some of these were named after him.

Maroon oriole (*Oriolus traillii ardens*)

A sub-species endemic to Taiwan, and a Grade 2 Protected Species, the maroon oriole lives mainly in low and middle altitude forests. The male is a vivid dark red colour with black head and wings. The female is a similar colour, but has a white chest and dark brown stripes.

Green-backed tit (*Parus monticolus insperatus*)

A sub-species endemic to Taiwan, the green-backed tit lives in high altitude forests, and migrates in the winter. It has a yellow-green back, white spots on the sides of its face, and dark brown wings with blue edge. Its head and chest are black, though there is less black on the female's chest.

Formosan green pigeon (*Treron formosae formosae*)

A sub-species endemic to Taiwan, and a Grade Two Protected Species, the Taiwan green pigeon is found in the eastern and southern sides of the island, and on Green Island and Orchid Island. It lives in high altitude broad-leaved forests. The back of its head and neck are a rusty orange color, its wings are dark green. The shoulders of the male are a striking maroon color.

Endemic to Taiwan, this land snail is found in the northern and central parts of Taiwan and in Taroko, Hualien county. It lives in low altitude mountains and prefers a moist environment, such as piles of leaves, or decomposing soil. The younger snails live on trees. This snail has a low conical shell with a pattern of oblique lines.

Land snail (*Dolicheulota swinhoei*)

Endemic to Taiwan, this land snail is found in Kaohsiung and further south. It lives in the middle and higher tree layers, and is often found on tree trunks, branches and the backs of leaves. It has a high, green-brown shell, with many oblique pale markings.

Longhorn beetle (*Paraglenea swinhoei*)

Endemic to Taiwan, this longhorn beetle is found all over the island in low and medium altitude broad-leafed forests. Measuring 1.4-1.8 cm long, it has a pale blue black. The first section has two black spots. The second section has six black spots (three on each wing cover), the last pair being black spots with a white dot in the center. The long horns reach back slightly beyond the ends of the wing covers. They are longer on the male than the female.

Ghost crab (*Ocypode stimpsoni*)

The ghost crab is found on all sandy beaches in Taiwan. During the breeding season, it is orange or bright red in the daytime, turning a dark red color if frightened. It will also turn a brown/grey colour, and almost black-brown at night. It is called a ghost crab because of its ability to move fast and change direction quickly.

Double branded black crow (*Euploea sylvester swinhoei*)

The double branded black crow is a butterfly. It is found throughout the island in low to medium altitude mountain areas. The back of its forewing has a blue-purple shine, while the front is dark-brown with two inconspicuous pale stripes near the back on the male, but not the female. It was collected by Swinhoe in Taiwan, and sent to the UK, where it was classified and named by Alfred Russel Wallace.