Fruits from a Lost World

Dispersal Anachronisms in Madagascar

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Introduction

Within the last 2000 years, Madagascar has lost a unique menagerie of large animals, among them giant lemurs and giant tortoises and the iconic elephant birds. With the disappearance of Madagascar’s charismatic megafauna, many of the island’s plant species have lost their co-adapted seed dispersers. Their fruits and seeds are now far too large to be dispersed by any living native animal, meaning that these ‘orphans of extinction’ will eventually share the sad fate of their animal partners. Having lost their co-adapted dispersers, these plant species live on borrowed time. Our aim is to find, study and hopefully rescue them.