

CENTRE FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE SEMINAR SERIES 2012-2013

Tuesday, 9 October 2012 (Week 2)
5.00 pm – Ramphal Building Room R.014

Professor Harriet Ritvo

**(Arthur J. Conner Professor of History at the Massachusetts
Institute of Technology)**



Going Forth and Multiplying: Animal Acclimatization and Invasion in the 19th Century

The nineteenth century saw numerous transfers and attempted transfers of animal populations, mostly as the result of the spread of European agriculture. The exchange of animal populations facilitated by the acclimatization societies that were established in Europe, North America, Australia, among other places, had more complicated meanings. Introduced aliens were often appreciated or deplored in the same terms that were applied to human migrants. Some animal acclimatizations were part of ambitious attempts to transform entire landscapes. Such transfers also broached or blurred the distinction between the domesticated and the wild. The intentional enhancement of the fauna of a region is a forceful assertion of human power. But most planned acclimatizations failed, if they moved beyond the drawing board. And those that succeeded also tended to undermine complacent assumptions about human control.



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