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Continuing *Invertebrate Taxonomy*



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Foreword

The Australian biota is amongst the most fascinating in the world, characterised by high diversity and a preponderance of relictual elements. The total extent of the biota is difficult to estimate, especially for groups that are little studied, such as invertebrates, fungi and protists. Most sampling efforts by many biologists are rewarded with species that have never been encountered in Australia previously, or are new to science. Concomitantly, the distributions of many of these taxa are poorly known and enormous gaps in our knowledge still exist. Amongst the most curious of all are those taxa that possess naturally small distributions. Sometimes termed short-range endemics, or localised endemics, these species are restricted by factors that are sometimes obvious, such as occurring in isolated pockets of suitable habitat (e.g. caves, rainforest remnants), but often not so obvious. The recognition and identification of short-range endemics is crucial for a better understanding of the biogeographical relationships of the Australian biota and is necessary to highlight gaps in the conservation efforts of government agencies.

During July 2001, a half-day symposium entitled 'Short-range Endemism in the Australian Biota' was held as part of the joint meeting of the Society of Australian Systematic Biologists and the Australasian Evolution Society at the University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria. The

symposium was jointly convened by myself and Elizabeth James of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, and the papers presented highlighted current research on the topic amongst Australian workers.

The present volume brings together 12 papers based upon symposium presentations dealing with zoological topics. Five other papers dealing with botanical issues are being published in *Australian Systematic Botany* (Volume 15, Number 4). In my opinion, these papers form a valuable inventory and interpretation of short-range endemism amongst the Australian biota.

This volume would not have been possible without the support of Camilla Myers, Editor of *Invertebrate Systematics*, who brought the papers to fruition. I am also grateful to Liz James for organising the botanical papers and Robin Wilson (Museum Victoria, Melbourne) for his enthusiastic encouragement regarding the symposium. However, the greatest acclaim is reserved for the presenters of the papers during the symposium and the authors of the subsequent written contributions for their cooperation and enthusiasm.

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