

The New Nature: winners and losers in wild Australia

T. Low, 2002

Penguin Books, Australia.

Pp. xi and 378. ISBN 0 670 88466 9

RRP AUD\$29.95.

JENNIFER JACKSON¹

NATURE is not as it used to be. Changes in ecosystems instituted by people have led to a reshuffling of the ecological pack, throwing species together in unpredictable new combinations. In *The New Nature*, Low discusses this concept and how it relates to ecology in Australia. The book is the latest offering from biologist Tim Low, it follows his successful book *Feral Future*, but in no way replicates it. *The New Nature* examines the winners and losers in wild Australia, regardless of their origin. Winners are classified as those species which flourish in our constructed world, while the losers are those failing to survive. The challenge lies in helping the losers, not the winners when managing natural systems.

Humans have had a widespread impact on this earth, and instead of managing natural systems by trying to restore them to their original condition, Low discusses how to manage human constructed environments that have already gone through change. This does not necessarily mean managing the environment should involve protecting native species and destroying all exotics, but the need to consider the winners and losers in our environment. The book investigates many ironies in modern

environmental management, which can include, for example, keeping the weeds that have replaced native plants, because they may provide habitat for rare and endangered animals, or culling kangaroo populations in national parks because of problems with overgrazing. Low describes this new ecosystem we have created in some detail, and how, as a result, natural resource managers are faced with problems that are often resolved by using innovative management solutions.

The New Nature is destined to be as successful as Low's critically acclaimed *Feral Future*. The book brings something new to ecological literature by concentrating on issues not previously covered in books on the environment. It is full of descriptive content, which includes a vast amount of interesting and amusing anecdotes. At times Low is quite critical of governments, farmers and conservation groups, yet the book has been thoroughly researched giving Low good support for his arguments.

The book is structured into four parts. The first gives an introduction to changes in ecosystems, followed by an analysis of the problems faced by the global distribution of ecological interactions. Low then looks at conflicts being faced by nature, concluding with resolutions and future management considerations. The text is easy to read and would appeal to anyone with an interest in environmental issues. I would especially recommend this book to those who work in an environmental field, as it is thought provoking and could benefit them by broadening their way of thinking.

¹School of Natural Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Western Australia, Australia 6027.