

## **Biodiversity and the Re-introduction of native fauna at Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park. Proceedings of the Cross-cultural Workshop on Fauna Re-introduction, Yulara, N.T.**

Edited by J. S. Gillen, R. Hamilton, W. A. Low and C. Creagh, 2000.

Bureau of Rural Sciences, Kingston, ACT.

168 pp. ISBN 0 642 21450 6.

RRP AUD\$19.95.

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ULURU–Kata Tjuta National Park (UKTNP) is World Heritage listed for both its cultural landscape and biological values, as well as being a Biosphere Reserve. However, introduced predators and competitors, and a reduction in traditional Aboriginal land management practices have had a significant impact on much of the original fauna. A cross-cultural workshop was held in September 1999 to discuss the re-introduction of native animal species to the National Park. Presentations were given by specialist scientists, involving their programmes from arid and semi-arid environments in South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia. In addition, presentations were held by the local Aboriginal people, the Anangu, who expressed many of their concerns and reservations relating to the re-introduction project. This book details the material presented, and although the workshop transpired three years ago, the information is still relevant to reintroductions occurring today.

The introduction sets the scene for the reasons behind the proposed project. The workshop participants were initially taken to a relict mitika (boodie) mound in UKTNP, where senior Anangu discussed their past experiences with locally extinct animals. This gave the workshop participants and readers some insight as to what the fauna in the region was like before the ecological balance was drastically altered.

Three sections follow the introduction. The first section presents five scientific papers which focus on issues within a regional context. Due to the large indigenous involvement in the project, senior representatives of Aboriginal organizations presented papers in relation to cultural considerations for re-introductions. The second section introduces three scientific papers discussing the issues of feral animals

and their affect on native fauna. The nine papers contained within the third section are set aside to discuss the intricacies of re-introductions, and involve summaries of other projects conducted throughout the country, as well as recommendations by experienced scientists for the proposed re-introductions in UKTNP. The main point that is emphasized throughout this section is the need for exotic predator control and the appropriate long-term monitoring of the health of the released species.

The strength of the text is that many experts in related fields were present at the workshop to give their views on how the re-introduction programme should proceed. The publication also takes into account the future management of the Park and the social and economic effects of re-introductions on the local community. The fact that a paper was presented discussing the effects of the re-introduction on the local human community is a credit to the workshop organizers, in that they have attempted to encompass all the faculties that the re-introduction may influence.

A potential weakness in the text is the lack of overseas experience. Scientists from other countries with similar re-introduction programmes may have been able to provide new information on ways to improve the chances of success. Although existing in a different environment, it may have been interesting to hear from some New Zealand scientists whose species are suffering the same decline due to introduced predators.

The proceedings of the workshop are intended to be read by scientists involved in translocation and re-introduction programmes of arid and semi-arid fauna, and possibly the general public who are interested in the return of native fauna to Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park. The Workshop designers have successfully brought together a group of specialist scientists and indigenous managers who were able to give a thorough and rounded assessment of the potential problems associated with any reintroduction project likely to be conducted in those environments.

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