

that mosses, ferns and fungi are taxa that pose similar conservation problems because of a general lack of knowledge and interest about them. In Chapter 17, Horne, Short, Van Praagh and Yen continue with the theme of invertebrate conservation with a very informative discussion of the conservation and management of invertebrates on private land.

Chapter 10 by Mansergh, Jelinek and Clunie is titled "A Review of the Action Statement Process under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*". These authors provide a fair overview of the Act, its purpose and achievements to date. They provide a good summary of the advantages, areas for improvement and future directions of Action Statements.

Crosthwaite, in Chapter 11, provides a timely reminder that it is important to identify and address the social and economic issues in recovery planning. This may seem obvious but it is still often ignored by conservation managers.

One of the catch-cries often heard from the public is that "We want to do the right thing but we are not sure

what that is?". This book is going some way towards bridging this problem. In particular, Bennett (Chapter 15), Crosthwaite (Chapter 27) and King (Chapter 28) discuss some initiatives to involve and interest the public.

Overall the book will be a useful tool for researchers and teachers of conservation biology. The case studies described in chapters 5–9 provide an insight into the problems faced and how they are sometimes overcome — these lessons will be very useful to workers designing and implementing species-specific studies and recovery programmes of fauna. One area not covered by this book is how to deal with situations where landowners deny reasonable access to scientists and managers who are trying to arrest population decline of an endangered species.

In this book there are many issues discussed and the book should be a useful starting place for the general public, politicians and students who require information on the conservation issues facing Australians.

## Herpetology in Australia: A Diverse Discipline

Edited by Daniel Lunney and Danielle Ayers  
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*HERPETOLOGY in Australia* was published as a companion volume to the proceedings of the Second World Congress of Herpetology, held in Adelaide in 1993–94. It does not attempt to pre-empt nor duplicate the information presented at that conference, but to provide an Australian overview of the study and management of Australia's reptiles and amphibians. As such, *Herpetology in Australia* also complements, rather than competes with, other key works, such as Cogger's *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia*; herpetofaunal systematics and biology, including evolution, reproduction and behaviour, under both natural and captive conditions, are but minor elements of this collection.

The book is aptly subtitled, for indeed, the full and proper study of a group of organisms involves many aspects; Lunney and Ayres have done an excellent job in bringing these diverse strands together in one volume. Their most valuable achievement is the focus *Herpetology in Australia* brings to the current state of conservation of Australia's herpetofauna. Of the more than 60 papers, over half discuss issues related to their management, both in the field, and in government policy.

This theme can be traced through many of the papers dealing with ecology and habitat relationships of numerous taxa, at local and regional scales, particularly those considering potential or realized impacts of habitat degradation. Contributions range from specific case studies on the effects of logging on Victorian skinks, through to the more general, including reviews of environmental factors in the decline of Australian frogs.

Following on from these concerns, are overviews and assessments, at state and national levels, of the current status of Australia's herpetofauna. Again, there is a useful breadth of perspective, from an elucidation of processes threatening reptiles in native grasslands on the Southern Highlands, to an extensive review of herpetofauna status in the Northern Territory.

There is the growing recognition of the important functional role herps play in Australian ecosystems. Two papers illuminate this point particularly well. Kennett and Russell-Smith implicate fresh water turtles as critical agents for seed dispersal for riparian trees in northern Australia. During his research into Mallee-fowl populations in the semi-arid zone, Priddel found that the birds' large active incubation mounds were important, and possibly the only, aestivation sites for Giant Banjo Frogs in remnant vegetation. The continued persistence of this amphibian in these areas is potentially threatened by the imminent local extinction of Malleefowl through land clearing and fox predation. Both studies demonstrate the necessity and value of an actively diverse, yet integrated, herpetology; as does the interesting discussion of the cultural significance of snakes to indigenous Australians.

Several papers take up the extension of this knowledge of ecology, status and threatening processes — what do we do with it. In addition to the frequent decrying of inadequate information, more specific issues are highlighted, such as the importance of frog hybrid zones, and the recognition of cryptic herp species. There is also a stimulating debate over the directions and priorities of cane toad research; is the quest for *Bufo marinus* control agent distracting us from the more critical problems of human-induced habitat degradation in herpetofaunal decline? What is, can be, or should be, achieved at a government level is pursued further by papers detailing and discussing relevant state and commonwealth legislation and policy concerning herpetofauna.

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