

environmental issues and the conservation of the state's great biological wealth were not even a tiny part of the election rhetoric — much less the central theme that ecological knowledge and common sense dictates that they should be.

If I have any criticism of *Gondwanan Heritage*, it is that it does not address the future and the need for environmental sanity in the West as strongly and as tenaciously as I would like. If the public and the nation's politicians continue to ignore their environmental and ethical responsibilities to the future, it is incumbent on the scientific community to speak up and do all in its power to change events. *Gondwanan Heritage*

fails to do this, but it does provide us with the insight and knowledge to rectify that situation. I can only hope the scientists who will read and use this book, just as those who contributed to its production, will heed their responsibilities to the future and to generations to come as much as they heed the documentation of the present and the unravelling of the past. Do not misunderstand me, it would be churlish of me not to praise the publication of this book. It is a landmark. It follows in the great traditions of the publications of Surrey Beatty & Sons. It will help us wrest the future from the present and I gladly recommend it to everyone interested in the conservation and natural history of the biota of Australia.

Future of the fauna of western New South Wales

Edited by Daniel Lunney, Suzanne Hand, Philip Reed and David Butcher.

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THIS attractively presented and enlightening collection of 22 chapters written by biologists, government land managers and a pastoralist, was derived from a 1991 symposium of the same name organized by the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales. A third of the book deals with pre- and post-European land management practices that have drastically modified the western region of New South Wales. Another third is dedicated to the impact of these practices on habitat modification and the major vertebrate fauna groups, and for some of the invertebrates. Most of the chapters regarding the biology and ecology of the region paint a bleak picture of the negative impact on its faunal components. By presenting information in this manner, however, it is hoped that the problems will be actively addressed to ensure the future survival of native fauna. The chapters written by government land managers of National Parks, CALM and Landcare read more optimistically, and provide positive solutions to some of these problems. From reading these chapters, I now have a much better appreciation of the principles of reserve design and also how the Landcare network plays a vital role in the off-reserve conservation effort on farms.

Both the preface and foreword make compelling reading. The thought-provoking preface by Gordon Grigg seeks to encourage biologists to play a more active role in exchanging information with land managers about issues such as sustainable land management. At the same time, Grigg recognizes that a compromise must be met to allow continued human economic gain from the region. After reading the opening chapter dealing with government attitudes towards the fauna of the region, one realizes how the fragile balances of the environmental components were destroyed in less than 50 years after the first exploration. Like so many other Australian ecosystems that have experienced similar modifications, this region must have been an incredible

area for biodiversity before humans decided to "manage" it. It is interesting to read that both government officials and land managers of the late nineteenth century soon identified the negative impact that land practises were having on the environment. One asks why major changes to land practises did not take place much earlier.

As a researcher studying a nomadic endangered species, I was pleased that the authors recognized that the majority of conservation of terrestrial biodiversity will be located outside of reserves. While there is no question that a representative reserve system is necessary, off-reserve management of private land is important, and this is where land managers and biologists should be working together. This involves both control of continuing habitat removal and restoration of degraded habitat. Furthermore, many authors appeal for an ecologically sustainable future where native fauna such as kangaroos and emus must be utilized as a resource instead of relying on exotic herbivores.

I found this a most comprehensive, informative and enjoyable book to read. Each chapter is quite short and non-technical. The book, as a whole, manages to cover the entire spectrum of topics involved in the issue of fauna conservation in the Western Division. I found that repetition of the same general geographic information in some of the chapters unnecessary. Perhaps an introductory chapter on such details may have avoided this. Most vertebrate groups received some attention which should guarantee wide readership by biologists. In addition, this book highlights the need for greater research efforts into the invertebrates of the semi-arid and arid regions of Australia. Most importantly, I feel confident that this book provides some realistic solutions for all land managers to adopt. It makes it clear, however, that the effort and the time scale involved for environmental rehabilitation is substantial, and there must be a change in attitude regarding alternative land practices. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in biological or conservation issues. It would make a very good addition to the reading material for any environmental management course.

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