

A Zoological Revolution

Lunney, D. and Dickman, C. R. Eds., 2002.
 Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales,
 Mosman and The Australian Museum, Sydney.
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THIS book asserts the 'revolution' of using Australia's native fauna to assist in its own survival. The 'revolution' promotes and debates keeping kangaroos as pets and eating them for dinner. It seems we can have our cake and eat it too. The "revolution" primarily aims to open up the debate and critically assess ideas such as native pets and promoting sustainable kangaroo harvesting. The book is a collection of papers presented at a symposium held at the Australian Museum, which explored the range and potential value, as well as the ethical and social implications of these controversial concepts. The authors are mostly luminaries in their fields who greatly advance the 'revolution' with their professionalism, personalities and impassioned yet objective arguments. The 'brightest' of the luminaries are discussed below.

Daniel Lunney (Senior Research Scientist, NSW NPWS) and Chris Dickman (Senior Lecturer, The University of Sydney) introduce and review the 'revolution'; their introduction is both advocatory and critical. They lively restate the old arguments and evoke our passions. They remind us of the need for novel solutions if we are to surmount the problems that confront us. They challenge the reader 'to storm the intellectual barricades' and 'read on.' I was compelled to do so!

Mike Archer (Director, Australian Museum) presents a broad ranging thesis in which he mixes personal anecdotes, opinion and fact in his personable and emotive genre. He argues that if we follow the evidence from deep-time then current reservations are inadequate to sustain wildlife and they will fail catastrophically. Mike argues that we can sustainably use native animals by valuing them economically, which will help restore currently degraded land and increase the quantity of conserved land. Mike promotes native animals as pets or companions using several points. He relates some personal experiences with native animals, which are both touching and familiar, yet appropriately juxtaposed with the relevant facts. It is a highlight of his thesis and the Zoological Revolution.

Gordon Grigg (Professor of Zoology, The University of Queensland), comprehensively reviews the conservation benefits of kangaroo harvesting; he overviews the past, present and future, as well as the health, conservation, ethics and economics. His approach is disciplined and detailed with enough quantification to support his conclusions. Both Grigg and Archer present compelling cases for kangaroo harvesting.

Penelope Figgis AM (Vice-President, Australian Conservation Foundation) comes out "In praise of National Parks". She argues that Mike Archer is undermining the existing protected areas (e.g., National Parks), but supports conserving a wider landscape. Her creative use of metaphor to defend her position is well juxtaposed with the preceding authors to ignite the sense of debate that builds as you progress through the Zoological Revolution.

"What Revolution." Harry Recher (Foundation Professor in Environmental Management, Edith Cowan University) asserts that, "eating jump steak and keeping native animals as pets are steps in the right direction, but only small ones." He redirects the conservation argument back to its roots in overpopulation and unsustainable economic practices. He calls for between 50% and 70% of currently cleared land to be returned to native vegetation with the emphasis on deep-rooted perennials. Harry's critique should not be taken as negative rhetoric, but as constructive criticisms to repair the cracks or abandon the canyons in the Zoological Revolution's proposals. I note that Harry refers to the Port Lincoln Parrot (Australian Ringneck) erroneously as *Platycercus zonarius*. It is correctly named *Barnardius zonarius* (Shaw 1805).

Drs Karen Viggers (Research School of Biological Sciences, ANU) and David Lindenmayer (Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU) are opposed to keeping native animals as companions. They argue in depth citing a list of questions that must be answered before such a high-risk approach to conservation is trialed. Their paper raises important issues, however, it is repetitive, emotive and too frequently mixes good examples with speculation.

Overall, the debate is vigorous with sparkling highly relevant data, opinions and ideas. It is the best example of a published symposium I have read. I was so enthralled by the question and answer sections of this book that I took a tape recorder to my next seminar to record the discussion. However, it is not simply a debate about the theses of eating kangaroo and keeping native animals as companions or pets. The Zoological Revolution is comprehensively referenced and demonstrates how to advocate while communicating your thesis. It has significant potential in undergraduate programmes that include sustainability and ecology in their curriculum. I recommend it as a central reference text in such courses. Indeed, this book may become a real revolution if it is read widely enough.

REFERENCE

Shaw, G., 1789–1813. The Naturalist's Miscellany (24 Vols.).
 Nodder, London.

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