

CLOSERange



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Environmental Self Environmental Health

Shark attacks are the unending source of an often gruesome fascination for most Australians. What I cannot believe is that Sharks would want to eat a food that is so dangerous to consume. Perhaps they haven't been told that humans are toxic food. "The higher you live and eat up the food chain, the more toxins are concentrated in your body. Toxin levels increase fifty or a hundredfold with every step up the food chain. Humans live near the top of the food chain...the simple truth is that we are now all holding body burdens of these chemicals". (Ausubel)

Toxic chemicals are a huge problem in many countries. Endocrine disrupters are chemicals that at low levels, parts per billion or parts per trillion, have impacts on health, fertility and intelligence and "Twenty-four billion pounds of these developmental toxicants are released in the United State of America annually" (Ausubel). According to the American reports, "Human breast milk has become one of the most toxic foods...the only known way to reduce the level of toxic chemicals in your body is to get pregnant and breast feed your baby: A mother's level of persistent organic pollutants declines very significantly when she gives them to her baby, who then carries that as part of her lifetime burden". "A small study that looked at the first bowel movements of babies and analyzed them for organophosphates pesticides found that all had more than one organophosphate pesticides residue in their bowel movement and most had five or six." (Ausubel) Reports in Victoria also raise concerns over level of toxins in mothers milk, especially in areas such as Myrtleford in the Ovens Valley where many chemicals were widely used in the tobacco industry.

If you examine the fat in your own body or in fish or wildlife, you'll find some two to three hundred industrial chemicals and carcinogens. Even in the Artic, where there is no industry to speak of, we find PCB's and other carcinogenic and toxic chemicals". (Ausubel) Therefore, it is not a problem that is not just centred on the affects on humans as bad as these may be, but also the wildlife who may well be living in the toxic dumping grounds that modern industrialized societies create. How does this affect the fauna that inhabit the protected and other areas of the world and what are the implications for management are anyone's guess?

Jared Diamond suggests that some past civilizations have collapsed for a number of reasons, some environmental, such as "through people inadvertently destroying the ecological resources on which their societies depend...committing unintended ecological suicide – ecocide". Diamond list eight categories through which past societies have ecologically undermined themselves; deforestation and habitat destruction, soil problems, water management problems, over-hunting, overfishing, effects of invasive species on native species, human population growth and increased impact of people". Modern society also faces four new ones; "human caused climate change, build up of toxic chemical in the environment, energy shortages and full human utilization of the Earth's photosynthetic capacity." Perhaps the sharks aren't all that hungry; maybe they are just very angry.

I am indebted for ideas and words for this story to Ecological Medicine. Healing the Earth, Healing Ourselves (2004) Kenny Ausubel and Collapse. How societies choses to fail or Survive Jared Diamond (2005)

AGM
FRIDAY 27
MAY 2005

News on the
Fith
International
World
Rangers
Congress



A Few Words From the President

2005 has been a very quiet year for the VRA for a variety of reasons. BUT things have still been ticking away behind the scenes.

Over the past twelve months we

- sent in our submission to the Alpine Grazing Taskforce (which as many of you will know by now resulted in the cessation of cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park as of Tuesday May 24th 2005. An historic occasion!)
- finalised the discounts for all VRA members to access Parks Victoria parks with a 10% discount
- initiated discussion on a new structure for the VRA (to be resolved at the AGM)
- investigated options for investing our money (again, this will be finalised at the AGM)
- organised a social weekend
- participated in the review of the generic position descriptions for Parks Victoria Rangers-in-Charge, Rangers and Field Services Officers

Thanks to everyone for their efforts over the past twelve months, in particular Fiona Smith, Ion Maher, Sam Nester, Felicity Brooke, Glen Jameson, Tamara Karner, Annie Leschen and Libby Jude.

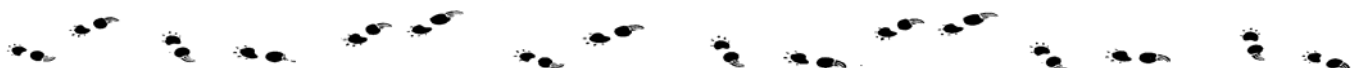
I will be stepping down as President at the AGM. So, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support over the past few years. I don't believe I've done the best job this year (for many reasons not the least of which was my absence for the first six months of the year) and maybe, in hindsight, I should not have taken it on for this year. We have a great committee lined up for next year and I look forward to bigger and better things in 2006.



And finally, just a reminder ... it's your VRA - get involved!
Until next time,

Elaine

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5th International Ranger Federation World Congress

Dear Ranger Colleague

5th International Ranger Federation World Congress

Like me, you will probably find it hard to believe, but it is now over two years since the last World Congress took place at Wilson's Prom, Victoria, Australia. Even more attention grabbing is the realisation that the next Congress, to be held in Stirling, Scotland, is less that 18 months away!

Thankfully a small group of dedicated people have been busy, beavering away with the preparations and we can look forward to a spectacular 5th World Congress. It takes place from the 14th - 21st June 2006 and the setting is the beautiful campus of Stirling University, which lies in the shadow of the monument to William Wallace, one of Scotland's most Famous sons and the inspiration for the film 'Braveheart'.

Continuing with the Braveheart theme, the opening ceremony is planned to take place within the historic Stirling Castle. However of equal importance to rangers perhaps is the close proximity of the campus to some of the most beautiful scenery Scotland has to offer.

As with all IRF Congresses, there will be keynote speakers of the highest calibre and vibrant ideas and initiatives from practitioners all over the world. More details are available via a link on the IRF web site (www.int-ranger.net/congress.html) and bookings are now being accepted online.

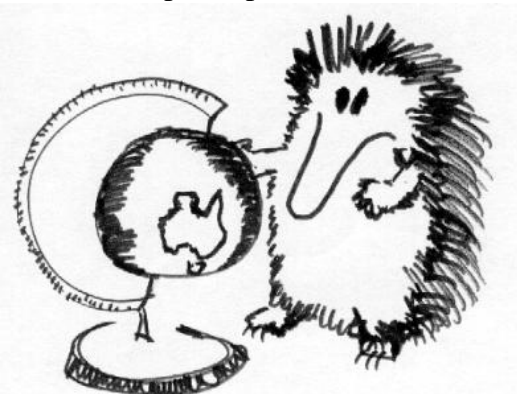
If you want to be a part of this unique and possibly life changing experience, you need to act now! Costs are likely to be £650 per person plus travel to Scotland (either Glasgow or Edinburgh) This will include all accommodation, meals and field trips. As a special bonus, an 'early bird' booking scheme will be available until June 2005 at a reduced cost of £550 per person (this price will only be guaranteed if the payment is made in full before June 2005).

Remember places at these congresses are limited, so to make sure of you place act now!!

Sean Prendergast
International Ranger Federation Consultancy

Report from Scotland

At the moment, we are working with the IRFC and our sister associations in England, Wales and Ireland to finish the IRF Congress program. There will be opportunities for delegates to enjoy pre- and post-congress tours and participate in work shadowing. These will be available both in Scotland and in the other countries of the British Isles.



There is also a call for papers, in the form of presentations and posters, on the website. Anyone who wants to submit an abstract for a paper should follow the procedure highlighted there.

Tony Wilson, Chair
Scottish Countryside Rangers Association

...I wonder how I can get there!!!



Thin Green Line Newsletter of the International Rangers Federation

International Rangers Federation President's Report

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

For the first time since the Fourth IRF Congress, held in Wilson's Prom in March 2003, this is the first quarter wherein we have not learnt of a ranger being killed or badly injured in the line of duty. Let us trust, hope and pray that this situation will continue.

I would like to again ask member associations and individual rangers to contribute towards Daniel Kurday's requirements. Daniel, a ranger in Araucarias Park in Chile, was left quadriplegic after being shot while attempting to arrest poachers in his park.

The IRF is in continual contact with the IUCN WCPA Tsunami Protected Area Coordinator, Dr Robbie Robinson, in working towards rebuilding lives and livelihoods in the tsunami-ravaged South East Asia protected areas. There is so much to do, but we have been extremely frustrated by political intervention. Even so, the IRF and rangers will become involved in capacity building in certain parks, as well as in establishing twinning programs in the region.

Both IRF and IRFC were represented at the SBSTTA 10 (subsidiary body on scientific, technical and technological advice) meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bangkok this past February, with a view to cementing not only relationships but also possible funded projects. The outcomes of this and the previous WCC of November 2004 are enormous and we will be working towards consolidating the gains made.

As stated in an earlier newsletter, the first Iberoamerican Congress of Rangers will be held in Chile from September 26 – 30, 2005. Latin America has been showing the way forward with regard to numerous initiatives and we congratulate our southern colleagues for this.

The World Wilderness Congress takes place in Anchorage, Alaska, from September 30 – October 6, 2005. Our vice president, Juan Carlos Gambarotta, will be giving a presentation, and will lead whatever ranger delegation can be built at the congress.

The Fifth Conference on Protected Areas in East Asia takes place in Hong Kong from June 21 – 25, 2005. There is no IRF delegation known at this time, but, as with the Iberoamerican congress and the WWC, I would make a special and urgent appeal to all rangers to try to raise their own funding and get to attend these meetings. As we showed at the World Parks Congress, rangers can and do make a difference, but you have to be there. All of these are important forums wherein the issues affecting rangers and protected areas need to be addressed by those who know the realities on the ground.

For those who have not yet booked your place for IRF 2006 World Congress to be held in Stirling, Scotland in June 2006, wake up or the opportunity will pass you by. Book by the end June and save some money. Details of the congress are available on the website.

And please take special care in developing and caring for our young rangers.

Until next time, warm regards,

David Zeller, President



International Rangers Federation

Memorandum of Understanding Signed in Bangkok



David Sheppard, Head IUCN Program on Protected Areas PPA, David Zeller President IRF, Achim Steiner Director General IUCN, Cassie Wright IRF Youth Development Officer, Sean Prendergast IRF Partnerships and Tim Snow IRF "Protecting the Protector" Lead

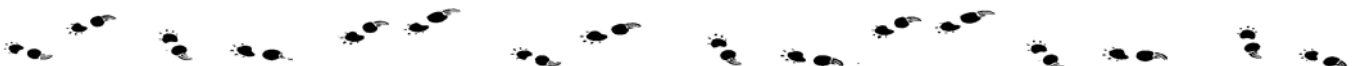
Amongst the heady mix of traffic, incense and symbols in the land of the smiling people, the International Ranger Federation (IRF) affirmed its place at the high table of global environmental discussion.

Bangkok Thailand played host to the 3rd World Conservation Congress (WCC) of the IUCN (World Conservation Union). This prestigious international gathering, which ran from the 17th to 25th November 2004, hosted delegates from over 150 countries, and was the venue for the signing of a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the IRF and the World Commission for Protected Areas (WCPA), the agency within IUCN specifically charged with looking after the world's special areas. IRF President David Zeller, was in Bangkok with a small IRF delegation ensuring that the Rangers are kept firmly on the world conservation agenda, expressed his delight with the signing of the MOU. "This is a major step in our campaign to raise the professional standards of Rangers, both in the way they work and in the way they are valued and supported by governments and society. The IRF has a unique opportunity through this MOU to maximize the benefits, both to ourselves and our Partners in the WCPA, in furthering the cause of Rangers in protected areas worldwide, greatly benefitting the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development".

Other highlights of the WCC included taking the IRF recommendations that were adopted in Durban World Parks Congress forward in international conservation programmes. The "Protecting the Protectors" initiative received a major boost when significant international figures recognised the threats that Rangers face and that funding mechanisms will be mobilised to address current inadequacies in Ranger capacity and support, particularly in protected areas impacted by armed conflict. Tim Snow, Chairman of the Game Rangers Association of Africa and IRF lead on this issue, said he was excited by the growing recognition of the importance of Rangers being able to carry out their vital work safely and effectively.

The IRF Youth Development Officer, Cassie Wright, met with other young professionals and is optimistic for the future in having youth integrated in the decision-making structures of the IUCN and conservation agencies. This issue was supported by other NGO's and taken to plenary where it was adopted. The IRF, with Sean Prendergast as partnership lead, also used the occasion to establish new partnerships and strengthen existing ties in cooperation towards the implementation of the Durban outcomes and the Programme of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The IRF congratulates Mr Valli Moosa on his election as President of the IUCN and looks forward to seeing the practical implementation of issues discussed regarding youth, Rangers on the ground, and indigenous and local communities.

Source International Rangers Federation Website



Dependants Fund

The Maca Agency, one of the boat companies that transport visitors to the Laguna de Castillos Protected Area, Uruguay, very kindly made a donation of 2% of the total price of all the tickets sold during last summer season towards the Dependant's Fund, a Fund that was created to provide some financial assistance to the dependant's of rangers killed or injured whilst on duty.

One of the first recipients to have benefitted from the fund is Daniel Kurday, not a dependant, but the ranger himself who was seriously injured after being shot by a poacher in Araucarias Provincial Park, in Misiones Province, Argentina. Daniel has been left a paraplegic and we think that he very much deserves attention from this fund.

I believe The Maca Agency have made a great example to follow. If a small company can help one who has suffered so much whilst carrying out his duties with a donation of US\$175, how much more could be added to the Fund and how many more could be helped if both big and small companies around the world that derive their income by operating in protected areas, would follow this example?

If you know of any others that can assist, or if you can help Daniel, please forward donations to his bank account, 402300004692799 in the name of Daniel Kurday, Banco Macro Bansud, Argentina.

I believe all we owe a big thank you to the MACA AGENCY of Uruguay.

Juan Carlos Gambarotta
Vice-presidente
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Uruguay

Interpretation Code and Handbook

The Interpretation Code, adopted at the IV World Ranger Congress in Australia in 2003 and presented to the IUCN V World Parks Congress in Durban, is now available.

The Ranger Interpretation Handbook encompasses 11 "Shared Principles" for Heritage Interpreters promoting sustainable development. These have been developed to increase understanding and the implementation of sustainable development practices. The first principles apply to interpretation in general, while the second set refers to specific focus on the impact interpreters can have with sustainable development. The "Shared Principles" were initially prepared as a proposal for an international conference about sustainable development and heritage interpretation by the Danish Nature Interpretation Service in co-operation with the International Ranger Federation (IRF), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Heritage Interpretation International (HII) and discussed, adapted and accepted at the International Ranger Federation's 4th World Congress in Australia, March 2003.

The "Shared Principles" are the basics of this handbook. It is hoped that rangers worldwide are inspired to use the principles in their work and to try new techniques in order to get even further with their audiences along the road to a sustainable development.

It is the intention to expand the examples found in the pages of the handbook and to create a truly worldwide tool for practitioners in developing a sustainable future for all. It requires the reader to take the time to add their own experience to the handbook. This is achieved by the reader filling in the Abstract/Case Study Form and sending it to the authors and in turn these will be added to the handbook on the internet. For further information contact [Arne Bondo Andersen](#)



Ranger Profile – Looking Up and Looking Down – ‘Mick’ (Sean) Keenan

Employment history

I started in 1981 with National park Service on the Track Crew at Wilsions Promontory National Park. Then I got a Park Assistants position at WPNP, moved Ranger1 Brisbane Ranges NP. Moved through various parks Steilitz Historic Park Reserve, Yellingbo State Nature Reserve, Snowy River NP, Alpine NP, then returned to the prom in 1996

What is your conservation Hobby Horse?

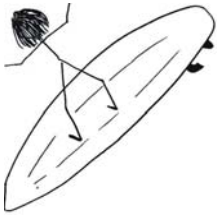
Invasive alien species and staying at your park so you can get some work done.

Who is your most admired conservationist?

Too many to mention. Peter garret, bob brown geoff durram vr

What is your environmental epiphany?

Didn't have one, I was born green.



How did you get into conservation / land management?

I was always in bush when I saw the position advertised I went for it and dived straight into the park service,

What is the most unfortunate roadkill you've seen?

A torn apart Emu, they don't make good road kills; its like hitting a feather down pillow... PPPppppooofffffeatherseverywhere

What is my favourite administrative procedure?

Credit card log - no perhaps there is no such animal they just prevent work getting done

What is the worst scar that you have left on the landscape?

Dozer line in the Powelltown State Forest for a fire break that was never used

What are you currently reading?

Too hectic to read lately

What is your favourite conservation tool?

Foxoff bait

What were you in a previous life?

A Giant Slough hanging round in the bush not doing much

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Mountain Designs 15% Discount

373 Little Bourke St. Melbourne Phone: 9670 3354 15% discount

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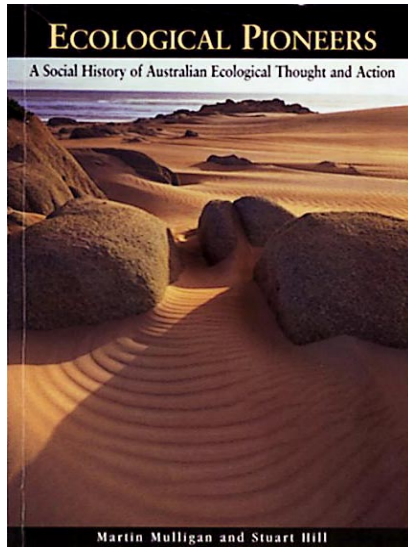
886 Nepean Highway, Moorabbin. Phone 9532 5337

Aussie Disposals 10% discount at all 36 of their stores across the state



Blue Tongue Reviews

Ecological Pioneers. A Social History Of Australian Ecological Thought And Action (2001) Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill. Cambridge

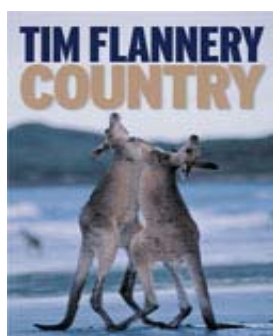


Mulligan and Hill show that interest and concern over environmental matters is not something new to European Australians, and there is no doubt that it has been inspired by the first Australians attitude to the environment. There has been a history of ecological thought and action going right back to the first contacts. This book traces a range of inputs from a range of sources into the environmental discussion and provides a handy overview of the development of ecological philosophical development.

Captain Cook had on board the eminent botanist Joseph Banks to gather information on flora and fauna. The French expedition of Baudin in 1802 was probably the most magnificent scientific expedition to visit the region. Charles Darwin visited Australia in 1836 on a world journey that was to culminate with the theory of natural selection. Early Artists and poets were obsessed with interpreting the 'Bush'. Henry Lawson explored "stoical responses to defiant landscapes" and Adam Lindsay Gordon "helped his readers appreciate landscapes by making them part of the story". The Heidelberg School artists produced a more authentic representation of the Australian landscape which was "responsible for a deeper shift in perception about the relationship between people and landscapes in Australia." One of the Heidelberg School, Arthur Streeton, "used his paintings and his column in the *Argus* to campaign for the protection of forests in the Dandenong area". Sidney Nolan explored myths embedded in the landscapes. We enter into cultural landscapes through Aboriginal art. Patrick White took strong stands in favour of the natural environment; many writers including David Malouf and Tim Winton mythologize places in their writing. Crosbie Morrison, Vincent Serventy, Myles Dunphy and the poet Judith Wright campaigned for environmental protection. Each artist signposting directions for better environmental management.

Australia has in fact been a world leader in environmental action in a few areas: a conservation group formed in Bendigo in 1888, the Northern District Forest Conservation League was probably the first conservation organization in the world. Stephen Boyden was a pioneer in human ecological thought; David Holmesgren and Bill Mollison's contributed the ideas of Permaculture; and the Bradley sister's contribution to a practical and philosophical approach to bushland management. The United Tasmania Group was the world's first environmental political party. The 'Green Bans' which were instigated by Trade Unions led by Jack Munday, inspired Europeans to initiate Green political parties.

Country (2004) Tim Flannery. Text Publishing



Sometimes this book seems to be just a ramshackle collection of all the thoughts and experiences that Tim Flannery didn't put into the other 16 or so books that he has either written or edited; and it probably is.

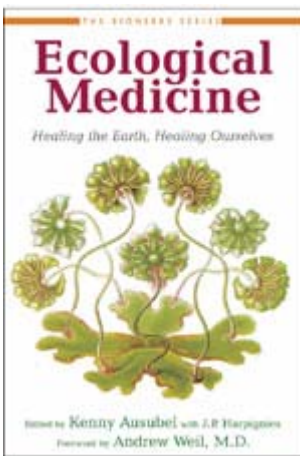
An unusual mixture of travelogue, personal experience and recollection combined with an outline of the evolution of the Kangaroo family, *Country* is an easy to read, informative and entertaining. There are accounts of Tim's early mentors (Tom Rich) and heroes (David Fleay), how he was lucky in getting early breaks and jobs in



natural history imbedded into an account of why the Kangaroo family has been so successful in inhabiting all the habitats that it does across Australia.

There is the usual philosophical tangle with Mike Archer (Flannery's PhD supervisor) regarding some aspect of natural history (something which Mike Archer always seems to respond to and attacks Flannery in his book eg 'Going Native'). This time over the theory that placental fauna developed in the southern hemisphere (Gonwana) and marsupials actually first developed in the northern hemisphere. All good scientific jousting I suppose as long as it gives us good science at the end of it.

An easy book to read and gather some good background on an amazingly diverse and successful family, that when it all comes down to it, we know so very little about. The description of those Ice-Age giant short-faced Kangaroo, the Sthenurines and the Troposodons, made me want to have a look at the book Flannery has put together with an artist depicting these extinct creatures.



Ecological Medicine. Healing the Earth, Healing Ourselves (2004) Kenny Ausubel (ed) Sierra Books.

There are some books that I find difficult to read. Not so much because of the complex language they use, although this can be a problem sometimes, but because of the disturbing messages that they convey. This is one such book.

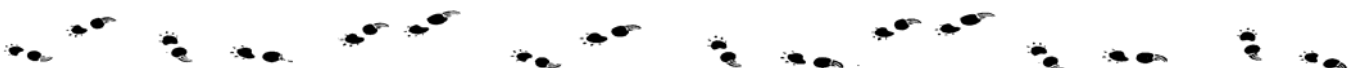
Already you may have read this edition of Close Range's Editorial and gleaned something of the sort of information that this book is full of. Lots of it is frightening stuff as medical practitioners come to terms with the affects on humans of a toxic world. "We are now suffering an epidemic of cancer, with the incidence and mortality rates having escalated dramatically since the 1940's. It's not caused by humans living longer, "there's overwhelming evidence that the increase in cancer rates results from avoidable exposure to carcinogens in the workplace, in consumer products, and in the air, water and soil".

However, there are also many hopeful articles that tell of local communities resisting global corporations form polluting in there localities. There are stories of indigenous philosophy in regards the self-healing nature of the world and the special power of plants to assist our own health problems.

Most of the authors come from a group calling themselves the Bioneers, who are "biological pioneers who are working with nature to heal nature and ourselves. They have peered deep into the heart of living systems to devise strategies for restoration based on nature's own operating instructions. They come from many cultures and perspectives, and all walks of life.

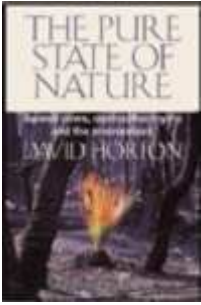
Bioneers are scientists and artists, gardeners and economists, activists and public servants, architects and ecologists, farmers and journalists, priests and shamans, policymakers and citizens. They are everyday people committed to preserving and supporting the future of life on Earth. They herald a dawning Age of Restoration founded in natural principles of kinship, interdependence, cooperation, reciprocity, and community.

Uniting nature, culture, and spirit, Bioneers embody a change of heart - a spiritual connection with the living world that is grounded in social justice. Their pragmatic strategies effectively address many of our most pressing ecological and societal challenges". www.bioneers.org



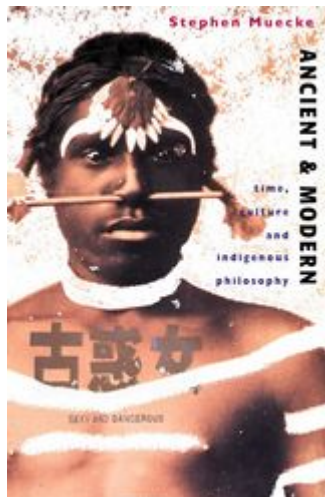
The Pure State of Nature: Sacred cows, destructive myths and the environment

David Horton. Allen & Unwin \$22.95



As the title suggests, sit down, buckle up and get ready for a critical discussion about most of the accepted stories about the Australian environment. Everybody is in line for a critical analysis of their work from Norman Tindale to Tim Flannery. Plenty to think about for the practitioner... "If you want to practice control burning in order to protect houses and farms, then do it in the same way as you would use a bulldozer to clear a fire break, but don't pretend that you are doing anything but damage to the environment".

Furthermore... "Aborigines did not cause the extinction of the megafauna... the environment that present day Australians inherited... was the end result of millions of years of evolution and adaptation to the unique climate and land". The arguments for this are laid out with detail and logic. And "If you commercialize an environmental resource, you do so to make money. Don't pretend that it also benefits the environment". The conservative side of politics rightly gets a fair share of criticism for its environmental ignorance, some thing which I felt could have also directed at the Labour Party. However, this book provides a refreshingly critical look at some of the accepted 'facts' and entrenched positions of the environmental discussion.

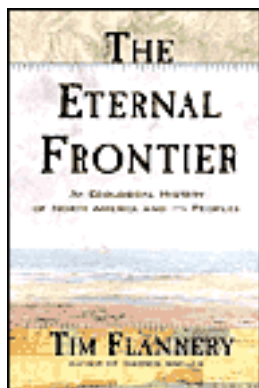


Ancient and Modern. Time, culture and indigenous philosophy. (2004) Stephen Mueke. UNSW Press

This book explores the concepts of ancient and modern worlds and reflecting on how our society is an enmeshment of both worlds. Many elements of our society, indeed each of us, carry both of these seemingly contradictory worlds about in us informing our world views and motivating our behaviour.

According to Mueke, "The question is: What kind of antiquity is Australia's modernity incorporating. This is the question that defines the very nature of Australian culture, for, if in the early years of national consciousness 'our' antiquity was clearly European, this is no longer the case". I must confess that I found it a difficult book to read due to its dense philosophical language and conceptual ideas crammed into each other. It was a chore at times to put together

the conceptual ideas running through argument. For example, "What I am driving at there is that things and people are mutually transformative: the place changes according to who comes to occupy it and what they do there; the people change as a consequence of the place, which is defined not just by its form, but also through the potentialities introduced in the intervals in its territory". A somewhat useful philosophical beginning in the discussion regarding the shape of the coming new world orders.



The Eternal Frontier. An ecological history of North America and its people. (2001) Tim Flannery

Sometimes reading about another country can provide insights into your own country of interest. So it was with this ecological history as I realized the full meaning of the term 'splendid isolation' in relation to Australia's ecological journey and evolution.

At various moments of geological time America has been attached to Europe / Africa / Asia through the land bridge of the Bering Straits and consequently there has been a major exchange of fauna. This meant that Elephants, camels and Rhinos among others, were part of the ancient biota. A different vision especially when you imagine these animals as part of another continents fauna. It also reflects on the diversification and domination of



marsupials in Australia.

Flannery's thesis is that "the very essence of the frontier experience lies in the extent of its resources, and when the resources are boundless, why conserve them or utilize them efficiently. The principal goal is to exploit them as quickly as possible, the move on. It is this frontier attitude to resource utilization that lies at the heart of much capitalism, and which presents a major challenge to conservationists today. In this sense, the legacy of the American frontier is still very much with us... The trouble, in part is that all of us remain involved with the frontier, and with the image of ourselves as its free and heroic creatures; and yet unless a glimmer of that unrestrained area of growth can be chased through vending ever new technologies to the world, the frontier is surely finished. What is worse, the limits that will characterize the centuries to come concern population as well as resources. Population growth is steadily slowing and global populations looks set to stabilize or even reverse during the twenty-first century. What will this mean for the global economy? For better or worse, the 'American system' of manufacture and financing is now a global phenomenon, embracing even the remote tribes. Yet the system has a profound weakness, for it was born on the frontier...without increasing consumption, capital can have no increasing value".

Furthermore, the frontier may slip over international boundaries under the guise of just wars, to continue resource utilization and economic expansion.

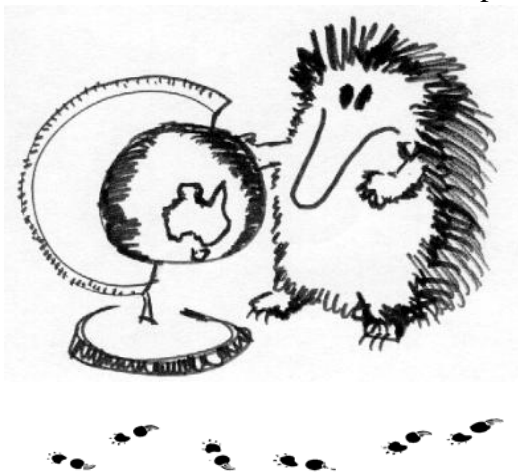
**Edward O. Wilson The Bottleneck
(an excerpt from Scientific American.com 24 Feb 2002)**

We have entered the Century of the Environment, in which the immediate future is usefully conceived as a bottleneck: science and technology, combined with foresight and moral courage, must see us through it and out

The relative indifference to the environment springs, I believe, from deep within human nature. The human brain evidently evolved to commit itself emotionally only to a small piece of geography, a limited band of kinsmen, and two or three generations into the future. To look neither far ahead nor far afield is elemental in a Darwinian sense. We are innately inclined to ignore any distant possibility not yet requiring examination. It is, people say, just good common sense. Why do they think in this shortsighted way? The reason is simple: it is a hardwired part of our Paleolithic heritage. For hundreds of millennia, those who worked for short-term gain within a small circle of relatives and friends lived longer and left more offspring--even when their collective striving caused their chiefdoms and empires to crumble around them. The long view that might have saved their distant descendants required a vision and extended altruism instinctively difficult to marshal.

The great dilemma of environmental reasoning stems from this conflict between short-term and long-term values. To select values for the near future of one's own tribe or country is relatively easy. To select values for the distant future of the whole planet also is relatively easy--in theory, at least. To combine the two

visions to create a universal environmental ethic is, on the other hand, very difficult. But combine them we must, because a universal environmental ethic is the only guide by which humanity and the rest of life can be safely conducted through the bottleneck into which our species has foolishly blundered.



Membership Application

The VRA is a non-profit professional organisation. Membership and travel costs to meetings and functions are tax-deductable.

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Executive Committee Contacts – 2003 / 04

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