

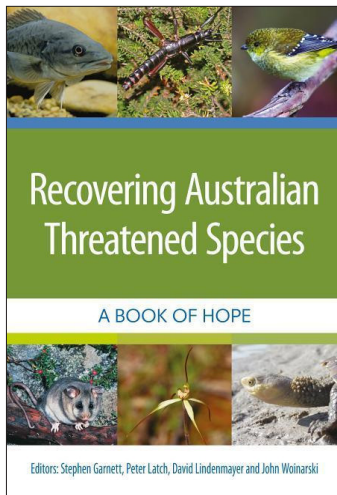
Book Review

Recovering Australian Threatened Species: A Book of Hope

Edited by S. Garnett, P. Latch, D. Lindenmayer and J. Woinarski

CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, 2018

Paperback 360 pp. ISBN 9781486307418, RRP AU\$59.95.



As practitioners of conservation, we are often faced with Red Lists, declining populations, local extinctions and dwindling resources. Sometimes it is hard to remain optimistic. This book provides a timely reminder that not all is lost, and that in fact there are many recovery projects supported by a multitude of dedicated professionals that have met with success.

This book contains 32 chapters, including introductory and concluding chapters as well as specific case studies. The case studies are formulaic and follow a common template that covers important aspects such as clear definition of the problems faced, the roles of research, partnerships, monitoring, planning, policy and funding. The clear articulation of reasons for success for each project is a very useful addition. Obviously, the editors were faced with a decision on whether to examine fewer case studies in greater detail, or to include more case studies with a briefer treatment. They opted for the latter but each case study is supported by comprehensive reference lists that allow the reader to delve deeper.

A closer examination of the selected case studies provides an interesting insight of where conservation efforts are focused. Eight relate to birds, five to mammals, two to reptiles, one each to amphibians, fish and invertebrates, and four to plant species. Four case studies focused on broadscale processes and three examined communities consisting of multiple species. Despite recent calls and evidence for the need for holistic approaches targeting processes, communities and landscapes, it is clear that the basic unit of currency in conservation biology continues to be the single species (nearly always with a backbone and frequently with feathers or fur).

Ornithologists will find the diverse case studies relating to birds of particular interest. They include very small and closely-watched populations such as the Helmeted Honeyeater, Norfolk Island Green Parrot and Forty-spotted Pardalote; and notorious skulkers such as the Eastern Bristlebird, Noisy Scrub-bird and Western Ground Parrot; as well as continental-scale efforts in the case of the Malleefowl. Iconic and much-loved species such as the Kangaroo Island Glossy Black-Cockatoo and the south-eastern subspecies of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo are also featured. The importance of good science and knowledge of species' biology supported by sound planning and cross-sector collaboration feature prominently in these examples.

The final chapter summarises the key factors contributing to success of conservation programs and makes for pertinent reading. It discusses the very notions of defining success and the need for these to be realistic. The roles of community involvement, species champions and supportive policy and governance frameworks are acknowledged, as is the case for strategic and marketable long-term investment from a variety of sources. This book will be of interest to anyone with even a passing interest in conservation and the natural world. Despite being written by multiple authors, the case studies are engaging, easy to read and supported with colour images, charts and maps. Students in particular will find this compendium a useful resource but, perhaps most importantly, it should be on the shelves of key decision makers and providers of funding. It serves as a reminder of what all of society stands to gain when we give conservation the best possible chance of success.

Mark Antos
Parks Victoria, Melbourne