

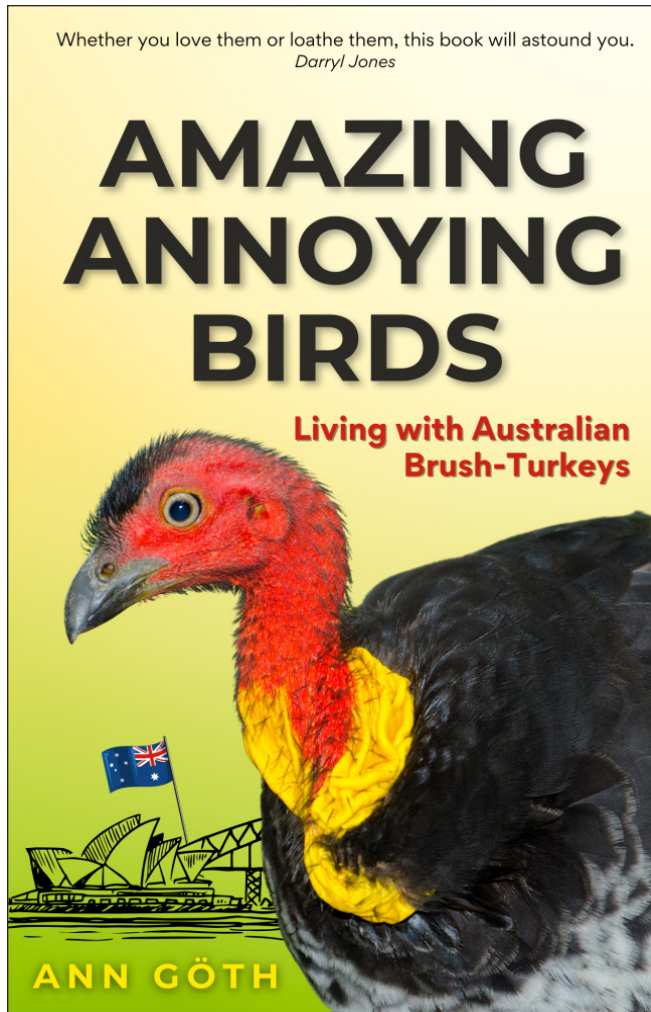
Book Review

Amazing Annoying Birds – Living with Australian Brush-turkeys

By Ann Göth

Natural Publishing, Sydney, 2023. Paperback, 143 pp., 28 black-and-white illustrations.

RRP \$24.99, ISBN 9780648603702.



What a delightful book! So very cheerful about a bird that is sending plenty of gardeners crazy with its energy and determination. Australian Brush-turkeys really are quite extraordinary, and one hopes that the stories Ann Göth tells in this short tale of their biology creates an atmosphere of forgiveness for their gardening style.

There are many things to like about this book. The first is that Ann is a genuine expert on the species, having studied megapodes for years, and she manages to convey the joy

in discovering aspects of its biology that are completely new to science. As she and her students sit through the night with their chocolate bars watching the baby turkeys climb up through the leaf litter above them, there is a real sense of the suspense of what is going to happen next (even if the little birds were so tired after escaping their eggs that the observers had to watch the chicks rest for hours!). I was surprised how much I have learnt from reading it – I love the way each little bit of extra knowledge generates a plethora of new questions that Ann also explores right down to the molecular level.

The second is the generous and enthusiastic credit that Ann gives to all the other people who have worked on Brush-turkeys – telling the story of a species is rarely the work of one person. Ann has distinguished company in her passion for Brush-turkeys and each is given full credit for what they have uncovered. Among the most remarkable of her stories was how she was able to corroborate the observations of Ngadon'jii people that they saw more females after a hot breeding season, more males after a cool season. I enjoyed too the notes from Ann's interviews with some of the people who study or manage Brush-turkeys.

Finally, there is the cheerful simplicity of the writing. A real affection for Brush-turkeys shines through but so too for the people for whom Brush-turkeys are a part of their lives. Although the printed book has black-and-white pictures, to keep the price down, the illustrations are sufficiently simple and clear to see what is happening, even if one cannot see the full glory of the red head and wobbling yellow wattle that are available in the e-book.

So, I thoroughly recommend this book, especially for those trying to understand why their garden is in such disarray.

Stephen Garnett

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