



Boom and Bust: Bird Stories for a Dry Country

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Winner of the 2009 Whitley Medal

In *Boom and Bust*, the authors draw on the natural history of Australia's charismatic birds to explore the relations between fauna, people and environment. They consider changing ideas about deserts and how these have helped to understand birds and their behavior in this driest of continents.

The book describes the responses of animals and plants to environmental variability and stress. It is also a cultural concept, capturing the patterns of change wrought by humans in Australia, where culture began shaping the landscape about 55,000 years ago as ecosystems responded to Aboriginal management. In 1788, the British settlement brought, almost simultaneously, both agricultural and industrial revolutions to a land previously managed by fire for hunting. How have birds responded to this second dramatic invasion?

Boom and Bust is also a tool for understanding global change. How can Australians in the 21st century better understand how to continue to live on this land as its conditions dynamically unfold in response to the major anthropogenic changes to the whole Earth system? This interdisciplinary collection is written in a straightforward and accessible style. Many of the writers are practicing field specialists, and have woven their personal field work into the stories they tell about the birds.

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