

***Fear of Ferals* (proposed monograph)**

Libby Robin

Feral animals have long been a major problem in Australia. Eric Rolls documented the spread of invasive species in *They All Ran Wild* (1969), one of Australia's first environmental histories. His book considered the historical irruptions of rabbit populations over most of southern Australia and plant irruptions like prickly pear (*Opuntia spp.*), which infested the pastoral lands of Queensland in the 1920s and 30s. Each outbreak was met by major scientific efforts, often led by state departments of agriculture and the national scientific organization, CSIRO. Since the 1980s, conservation biology and "invasion biology" have grown as sciences, but so too have the problems with millions of formerly domesticated animals (including camels, horses, pigs, goats, cats, dogs, and donkeys) running wild in outback Australia. Some of the efforts to control agricultural problems (for example, beetles in sugar cane crops) have themselves gone wild: since the 1930s, cane toads have been growing in body-size and spreading right across northern Australia. Weed management has also become a distinct science and policy-making area, with "Weeds of National Significance (WoNS)" being a focus of funding. Some native animal populations also irrupt, and become "feral"—including kangaroos in the national capital, Canberra, and possums in many of the big cities.

This book asks questions about how we manage problem biota: science is important, but alone it is not enough, and too expensive. Saving money suggests broad scale operations that have their own problems. Communities and citizen science are actively involved in dealing with the scourge of nature running wild, including, increasingly, Aboriginal people managing their own country in traditional ways. The central thesis of the book is the idea that, while there is much goodwill, often the frameworks and scales for conservation work are wrong. Rather than assuming that invasive biota needs *fixing*, there is a place for the humanistic approach of "staying with the trouble" (Haraway). By paying more careful attention to the practices of humans who are "managing" the environment, it might be possible to achieve better ecological outcomes and also better ways of living for the humans. A resilient approach to living in Australia as climate change forces new accelerations on biota and people demands positive, rather than negative, ways of spending time with nature.

Proposed Chapters:

- Busting, Bombing, and Poison: Militarism in Environmental Management
- The Feral Kid and Australia's Apocalyptic Future
- Longing and Belonging: Solastalgia, Nativism, and Biosecurity
- Nature Study and Educating the Senses
- Gardening the Bush: Ecological Restoration and Personal Health
- Rewilding the Urban Imagination
- Staying with the Trouble: Nature Within and Without