
Foreword

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Australians have stewardship of a beautiful, diverse and unique environment. We have long had a sense that the biodiversity of this country is special. We use unique Australian species such as kangaroos and emus in our coat of arms, as commercial emblems, and to identify ourselves at international sporting events. Yet, despite our sense of its importance as part of our national identity, in many parts of our country biodiversity is in trouble.

This book is not just about quantifying the challenge. It is also about identifying practical solutions in response to change in the Australian landscape. Like their colleagues in the companion volumes, *Climate Change* and *Water*, the authors of this book have sought to provide a bridge from the scientific literature to the wider Australian community, while providing the depth of science that this complex issue demands.

In the chapters that follow, CSIRO's leading biodiversity scientists describe the ancient origins and unique features of Australia's species, as well as the current status of our biodiversity on land and in rivers, lakes and the sea. They also outline tools for management and planning, including for Australia's protected area system. The book does not shy away from the problems inherent in translating such a broad canvas of values into pragmatic actions.

One of the unique aspects of Australia's flora and fauna is its interaction with the world's oldest continuous culture, and therefore we have dedicated a chapter to Indigenous perspectives on biodiversity. The book also looks at how Australia's biodiversity interacts with agriculture, the resources sector, cities, and our changing global environment. Importantly, it also shows that biodiversity is in the eye of the beholder: for some it is our life-support system; for others it is a resource to be used; for yet others it is a precious cultural symbol.

Given the economic, ecological and social importance of biodiversity to our nation, CSIRO has been conducting research into Australia's biodiversity for nearly 90 years. CSIRO cannot do its important work without the support of our collaborators and partners. These include Australian and international universities, industry groups, research organisations, governments at all levels and, most importantly, the Australian community.

As Australia's national science agency, CSIRO is committed to providing trusted advice on the major risks and opportunities that our nation faces. We commend to you this synthesis of the latest scientific knowledge on Australia's biodiversity, and on the challenges and prospects for its management in the future.