

## Preface

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The impetus for creating this book arose from the discourse of a group of enthusiastic ornithologists who work not only within the framework of Western-style research, but also have experience in, and knowledge of, indigenous ornithology. At the 24th International Ornithological Congress, Hamburg, in July 2006, Sonia Tidemann had the honour of being the only participant from Australia to have a round-table discussion (RTD) accepted; but that RTD was the first on indigenous ornithological knowledge to have ever been held at an international ornithological congress. Participants requested that Sonia and Andrew Gosler combine their editorial expertise to produce a book to ensure that the diverse knowledge and approaches that emerged could be disseminated more widely, as well as preserved for future generations.

This is the first edited collection to bring together indigenous ornithological work from a number of different countries, as well as from an indigenous perspective and knowledge base. Through a series of studies from various parts of the world, this book deals with the relationships between birds and people; birds and language; collaboration between indigenous communities and others to protect birds; integrating indigenous knowledge within the management of threatened species; using knowledge to change attitudes; bird products as currency; hunting practices; and how birds are linked with land, life and everyday culture. It combines the work of ornithologists, linguists, conservationists and anthropologists who are, themselves, immersed in indigenous knowledge, working from an indigenous perspective and with indigenous peoples. We aim to present indigenous knowledge itself rather than a commentary on, or comparison with, Western and indigenous viewpoints. However, particularly in considering the conservation significance of indigenous knowledge, it is inevitable that some commentary and comparison will arise because of the dominance of the Western framework in international bird conservation.

An African proverb states that when a knowledgeable old person dies, a whole library disappears. In that light, this book presents knowledge that is new because it has not previously been captured or reported by indigenous peoples in English. It enhances engagement with some of the intangible dimensions and wider social aspects of indigenous ornithological knowledge so that they are not subsumed by mainstream agendas. The book also provides practical advice for professionals, demonstrating the relationship between mutual respect, local participation and the building of partnerships for research, as well as the resolution of joint problems. It identifies techniques that can be

transferred to different regions, situations, environments and collections. It identifies practices suitable for investigation, adaptation and improvement of knowledge exchange and collection so that there is a building of a sustainable future and holism of indigenous research and documentation practices in the field of ornithology, in particular.

The book would not have been possible without the vision and guidance of our publisher Tim Hardwick at Earthscan. We owe much to him, and to Claire Lamont, for their encouragement and the quality of the finished product. We are also particularly grateful to Mark Simon and Ian Sherman for their valuable publishing advice at key points in the project, and to our sponsors: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education; BirdLife International; British Ornithologists' Union; British Ornithologists' Club; Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Oxford University; and the Institute of Human Sciences, School of Anthropology, Oxford University.

Indigenous knowledge that embraces ornithology takes in whole social dimensions that are interlinked with environmental ethos, conservation and management for sustainability. The book is a global collection of indigenous ornithological knowledge from the 'inside', rather than an attempt to fit the content, approaches and messages into Western frameworks, and we hope you find it enriching.

*Sonia Tidemann and Andrew Gosler*  
January 2010