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explore

discover

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

nature

EDWARD LEAR DOWN UNDER

people

KEN COLES AND LIZARD ISLAND

culture

GAMELAN GETS A GONG



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CULTURE *change*

The 20th anniversary in June 2012 of the Mabo decision overturning the doctrine of *terra nullius* in Australia has justifiably been marked and celebrated. But the question of indigenous land rights is very much alive among several of our Pacific neighbours.

Kirk Huffman's story 'Making Land Work?' in this edition of *Explore* demonstrates this issue in Vanuatu extremely well, telling of the tension between traditional village custodianship of land and the temptations of modern Western, tradeable land ownership. Some argue that loss of connection to land resulting from sale or lease jeopardises the preservation of customs and cultures, while others argue that financial gains from land sales or leases can enable positive development and self-determination.

PROS AND CONS

To me the key underlying issue is how groups living a more traditional (perhaps 'not modern' is a better expression) life obtain enough information about the pros and cons of change to make an informed decision, and whether this is done equitably to enable all members of a group or community to have a view. A more insidious risk than a lack of information is 'outsiders' purporting to speak for or represent the traditional groups. We have seen this too often in Australia with missionaries or government-appointed 'protectors' speaking for Aboriginal people. On the other hand some people can be very honest and effective spokespeople for traditional groups, enabling their views to be heard. It is a dilemma for museums like the Australian Museum too: are we observers and chroniclers of change, or advocates of positions about the pros and cons of change?

OUR ROLE

The wider issue of the intrusion of the modern world onto societies living a traditional, relatively unchanged life is present right through the developing world. It can manifest as tribes and communities fighting loggers in the Amazon or Indonesia, or electoral violence in Papua New Guinea. Going again to the role of museums of indigenous cultures, we need to avoid the trap of being concerned only with what went before, that pre-dates some (ill-defined) point of modernisation, after which the culture is somehow devalued by being no longer 'traditional'. Our role is to record, think about and discuss all that happens, the good and not so good, to facilitate the debate and, sometimes, from a position of knowledge, offer trustworthy advice, just maybe to lessen the likelihood of society repeating past mistakes. And we have to do that while acknowledging the views of pro-development lobbyists, cultural preservationists and more importantly the people whose futures are at stake.

FRANK HOWARTH

Director of the Australian Museum



*“The music, which though it were
of a very strange kind, yet the sound
was pleasant and delightful.”*

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE ON VISITING THE EAST INDIES IN 1580

gamelan: MUSIC FOR THE PEOPLE



Twenty years ago, in the spring of 1992, the Australian Museum received an enormous consignment of rough-hewn timber crates, which had arrived from Indonesia with the support of Garuda Airways.

After days of unpacking and assembling a great array of components, like a huge Ikea flatpack with no instruction manual, the Museum became the proud owner of a complete Balinese gamelan orchestra. The new acquisition fulfilled an ambition of then-collection manager Zoe Wakelin-King and Sydney musician Gary Watson to establish the first active music scene in New South Wales for a growing Balinese community.

WHAT IS GAMELAN?

The gamelan is an orchestra of tuned percussion instruments and has been part of traditional Indonesian culture for many centuries, the oldest known instruments dating to the 12th century. Apart from its rich visual appearance, with ornate gilded carving depicting scenes from the Ramayana epic, the gamelan produces unique and fascinating sounds with five tone melodies, complex rhythmic patterns and scales.

Claude Debussy was said to have been transfixed by gamelan in Paris in 1889 and it influenced his compositions and those of many musicians since in the genres of jazz, electronic and rock.

The Museum's gamelan includes bronze metallophones and gongs, cowhide drums and bamboo flutes, and was acquired to be played rather than just stored or exhibited. Currently housed at the University of Sydney, the gamelan is used regularly by two different groups for performances and teaching. For the Balinese community group and friends, the gamelan is a cultural hub, and the weekly meetings provide opportunities for children to learn dances, music and cultural traditions from their parents.



GONG, THE ORCHESTRA

Watson established the second group, which goes by the name Sekaa Gong Tirta Sinar (literally, 'Club Gamelan Radiant Water') as soon as the instruments arrived in 1992. This group includes trained musicians from many backgrounds as well as people simply interested in Indonesian culture.

Membership is open to anyone interested in the music, and the group has been active ever since it was formed, performing frequently for the public and at music festivals.

Gamelan music is a vital element in many Balinese cultural events – wedding, funerals, religious festivals and many other occasions. It accompanies a range of classic Balinese dances, performed in Sydney over the past 20 years most notably by Nyoman Sumerti.

To my mind, it is best experienced outdoors. The group often performs at Gadigal Green, behind the Seymour Centre, Camperdown, which can resemble a scene from a Balinese village, the lights under the trees bringing alive the gilded carvings of the instruments and the costumes of the dancers, while the exotic music ebbs and flows in the warm evening air.

JAVANESE OR BALINESE?

Indonesia is one of our closest neighbours, yet its music and dance are not widely known. The rich diversity of cultures across the Indonesian archipelago has resulted in a myriad of musical styles, but the most complex and sophisticated are found in the gamelan music of Java and Bali.

Although from the same Hindu cultural roots, Javanese and Balinese music are quite different. Both styles are complex and multi-textured with layers of rapid ornamentation over the top of the melody. However, central Javanese music has a softer, more stately

Above

The gamelan group Sekaa Gong Tirta Sinar perform for the Living in Harmony Festival, March 2012, at Customs House, Sydney. Photo © Giles Gaskell.





Top

Detail of ornate carving on the instruments. Photo © Kin Kanazawa.

Above

The late I Wayang Gandera (far left on drum) leads the Balinese community group at the opening of the *Beyond the Java Sea* exhibition in 1992. Photo Australian Museum Archives.

sound reflecting its origins in the courts of Java. By contrast, the Balinese *gong kebyar* style has a faster, brighter and more energetic sound with explosive irregular sequences.

This style developed over the past 100 years as the old court structure waned and Balinese gamelan developed in the villages as a music of the people. Inter-village competitions developed in the wake of the 1965 political carnage in Indonesia, and these days competitive virtuosity reaches its peak at the annual Bali gamelan competition in the capital Denpasar, where representative finalists are supported with the intensity of a football crowd.

BALI LEARNING

In 2000, Tirta Sinar organised its first group visit to Bali for intensive lessons with prominent Balinese musician Pak I Wayang Gandera, who had visited Sydney in 1992 to teach gamelan. Earlier, Gandera had helped establish Balinese music teaching in the USA in the early 1960s during a spell as guest teacher at the University of Los Angeles.

The group was fortunate to have had his guidance and teaching, and although Gandera had died just one year after this visit, we have returned to Bali on several occasions, including in 2007 to attend his cremation in Peliatan. In December 2010, the entire group spent ten days in Bali rehearsing and performing with a professional Balinese troupe, Sanggar Cudamani.

Twenty years old, and now with a life of its own, the gamelan remains an outstanding example of how to use the Museum's collections as a catalyst for community-based activities.

COLIN MACGREGOR MANAGER, MATERIALS CONSERVATION AND FOUNDING MEMBER OF SEKAA GONG TIRTA SINAR.

WEBLINK >

For information about future performances visit www.tirtasinar.org.

If you are interested in learning to play Balinese or Javanese music, contact the author, email colin.macgregor@austmus.gov.au.

Right

The Ocean Sunfish, *Mola mola*, was first described by Swedish biologist Carolus Linnaeus in 1758. Photo by Randy Wilder © Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Far right

This spiny larval Ocean Sunfish (2 mm) resembles a miniature sun. Photo GD Johnson © USNM.



HERE COMES THE *SUN*... FISH

The Museum exhibition *Deep Oceans* includes a real Ocean Sunfish specimen that was originally preserved and stuffed more than 100 years ago.

The huge and weirdly magnificent Ocean Sunfish, *Mola mola*, is one of only five species of sunfishes in the world. With their large, round bodies, small mouths and lack of a 'normal' tail, sunfishes are among the most easily recognised of fishes, though the large dorsal fin can sometimes be mistaken for that of a shark.

IMPACT

The Ocean Sunfish can be found anywhere between the warm, shallow surface waters and cold ocean depths greater than 800 metres. At more than 3 metres in length and weighing 1.4 tonnes, adult Ocean Sunfish are especially noticeable when they collide with boats, which happens occasionally – perhaps because they aren't fast swimmers.

Collisions aside, sunfishes are harmless to people, feeding on jellyfishes, other small invertebrates and fishes. In some parts of the world, they are caught by people for food.

SHAPE-SHIFTERS

Sunfishes are amazingly fecund: a single adult female can release up to 300 million tiny buoyant eggs into the ocean at a time, where they mingle with sperm released by the male. The fertilised eggs soon develop into larval fish.

At around 2 millimetres in length, a young larval Ocean Sunfish with its relatively large pectoral fins and spines looks quite different to the adult and even has a primordial tail fin. As it grows, the body spines become less prominent, the body deepens and the teeth fuse to form beak-like plates. By the time it reaches 35 millimetres, the young sunfish looks a lot like a tiny version of the adult.

Instead of a tail (caudal) fin, the adult sunfish has a clavus – a 'tail frill' with rounded ossicles making up the margin. The number of ossicles is one character scientists use to tell the different species of sunfish apart.

The adult Ocean Sunfish has no visible spines and its abrasive skin is covered in small coarse projections called denticles that are tough enough to strip the paintwork from a ship's hull.

SEARCHING FOR SUNFISH

In Australia, the Ocean Sunfish has been recorded from the central coast of New South Wales, south to Tasmania and west to Mandurah, Western Australia. The species occurs in subtropical and temperate marine waters worldwide. Of the four Australian species of sunfishes, three occur in New South Wales: the Ocean Sunfish, the Southern Ocean Sunfish, *Mola ramsayi*, and the Slender Sunfish, *Ranzania laevis*.

But the easiest way to see one – the very same specimen that has been in the Museum collection since 1882 – is to hurry into the Museum's *Deep Oceans* exhibition before it closes on 14 October.

MARK MCGROUTHER FISH COLLECTION MANAGER
AND **BRENDAN ATKINS** EDITOR

Further reading

B Saunders, 2012. *Discovery of Australia's Fishes.* CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.

WEBLINK >

Read more about Australian sunfishes at www.australianmuseum.net.au/Molidae-Sunfishes and see the sunfish photo gallery at www.australianmuseum.net.au/sunfishes.



Opposite

Exhibition Project Manager
Liz Cowell. Photo by Stuart
Humphreys.

Right

Earrings with figures of Nike.
Greek, mid-4th century BC.
Gold; h 4.8 cm. © The State
Hermitage, St Petersburg.



bringing **ALEXANDER THE GREAT** *to australia*

HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT STAGING A MAJOR EXHIBITION LIKE *ALEXANDER THE GREAT: 2000 YEARS OF TREASURES*? WITH JUST 100 DAYS TO GO BEFORE OPENING, EXHIBITION PROJECT MANAGER **LIZ COWELL** SPOKE TO **BRENDAN ATKINS**.

How did the Australian Museum persuade the Hermitage to part with more than 400 of its treasures?

We'd been thinking about an exhibition that included Alexander the Great as just one of the characters, and were following this up when we heard about an exhibition presented in St Petersburg in about 2004–05. Our colleagues at Macquarie University introduced us to their Russian colleagues and that's where our correspondence started – very much one colleague to another.

Then through the Russian Embassy we had a direct introduction to Dr Piotrovsky, Director of the State Hermitage, and so our director was introduced to him and then visited the Hermitage in mid-2010. Again it was this personal contact that makes a difference I think when you are dealing with international institutions.

So there needs to be a matching of outlook, a fit?

Yes, definitely. They had packaged an exhibition about Alexander for Amsterdam, and I was fortunate enough to see it. It was very much a fine art show, quite spare, minimalist even, with modest interpretation. I then met with our colleagues in Russia to discuss the exhibition further and develop it for an Australian market.

We've added the story of Alexander, a narrative, which we think is a better fit for our audience. We want the beautiful objects but also want to know more about Alexander, who he was, what he was up to ... so we wanted to provide a lot more depth.

It's scheduled to open on the 24th of November – where are you up to at the moment?

We're about to start fabrication, the building of the sets. We're just finalising the 3D design and 2D graphics, which we're presenting for executive approval this week. We'll show them what the exhibition layout and Atrium is going to look like, what the text and graphics will look like, and so on.



And we're about to take delivery of some brand new showcases from Italy. They're going to be superb, and we've ordered them not just for this exhibition, but for other shows and for some of our following cultural exhibitions.

What can visitors to the exhibition expect?

I think firstly they're going to be overwhelmed by the diversity of objects we have coming – over 400 objects from the Hermitage in St Petersburg. For example, we have things like an enormous tapestry of Alexander and Darius's family that's over four by seven metres, going down to small coins and tiny cameos that are just so exquisite and made of many precious stones. There's quite a lot of gold jewellery, marble statues, terracotta pottery ... the diversity is just enormous and I think people are going to be really taken by that. They cover an enormous period, right from Alexander's time – there's even a few pieces that are slightly before him – right up to the 18th and 19th centuries.

We're being loaned some signature pieces normally on the floor all the time in St Petersburg. They can travel at this time only because it's the Russian winter when visitation at the Hermitage is a little slower than usual.

The exhibition also coincides with a big international conference presented by the Australian Society for Classical Studies in

January. They're bringing out some very well-known academics from the US and UK as key speakers, so that again was very attractive to the Russians, who will be part of that conference.

Much of the exhibition is to do with the legacy of Alexander and shows how his story has been interpreted throughout the centuries ... this can be seen in a design on a plate; or in a painting, or in an engraving for example. There are also pieces from areas that he went through, like Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria – the modern-day Middle East through to the Pakistan–Indian border.

So the exhibition shows Alexander's eastern campaign and the spread of Hellenism, of ancient Greek culture, which highlights Alexander's relevance today. You see it in architecture – our own building has that influence – in art, sculpture, language and politics.

So there's a whole program of information sessions and talks and workshops around it ...

Yes, it's not just the exhibition – there are many other programs. Members have a fantastic lecture series with eight or nine speakers and there'll be a stunning cocktail event to celebrate the opening. We also have a variety of public programs within the holiday periods, a wonderful theatre performance and creative workshops. So there's a quite a lot happening around the exhibition – it's a major cultural event for Sydney.



What other things can we expect in the exhibition?

We wanted to give a deeper interpretation of the objects coming, so we have touch screens where interviews are presented with experts providing more information, for example on ancient weapons and the logistics of warfare. So people can expect to see not just the wonderful treasures but also interactive innovative displays. We're having a fantastic touch table which will reveal the spread of Hellenism, as a kid's trail app called Pack & Plunder.

Can you tell me more about the touch table?

We're in the process of developing it at the moment. We have about five or six topics where we look at art and architecture, science, language and trade, for example, so you'll see a map of the Mediterranean basin stretching as far over as the Pakistan–Indian border. We're selecting a number of cities or areas which you'll be able to touch to reveal more information about those topics through images and video.

I hope that visitors will take away renewed admiration for this one man who could be such an incredible tactician and leader. You have to look at Alexander today and realise just how extraordinary he was – such a formidable character, such a tactical genius, so focused and so driven. He could, however, be entirely ruthless and cruel, but there was also a compassionate side. His is a huge legacy to Western civilisations, as we hope this exhibition will make clear.

BRENDAN ATKINS EDITOR

All photographs ©
The State Hermitage,
St Petersburg.

Opposite

Tapestry: *Alexander the Great and the family of Darius*. Many stories about Alexander were repeated over the centuries, like this one, which depicts the magnanimity or compassion Alexander showed to the family of the defeated Persian King Darius III. Tapestry woven at the St Petersburg Imperial Tapestry factory in 1745, with a design based on a painting by the French painter Charles le Brun (1611–90).

Above left

Cameo: *Alexander hunting a wild boar*. This piece shows the hero-king hunting on horseback. Cameo, 2 x 2.2 cm. Italy, 1st century AD.

Middle

Wine goblet showing the magnanimity of Alexander the Great. Another piece showing the legend of Alexander's compassion. Silver and copper goblet, embossed, gilded, enamelled and painted, by master Esaias Busch II in Augsburg, Germany, before 1705.

Right

Mantel clock: *The Vigil of Alexander the Great*. The gilded figure of Alexander on the exhibition promotional material is a detail from this bronze clock dating from the 1830s or 1840s. It depicts the legend of Alexander's will and diligence: to prevent himself falling asleep he would hold a ball in his hand; as he became sleepy, his hand relaxed and the ball would fall into a cup with a crash, waking him. Clock in cast bronze, embossed and gilded, St Petersburg.

CONNECTING *children* COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE

A NEW INDIGENOUS LEARNING HUB AT THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM CAME ONE STEP CLOSER WHEN MORE THAN 100 MUSEUM SUPPORTERS GATHERED FOR THE INAUGURAL FOUNDATION DINNER, *FOOD FOR THOUGHT*, WRITES ANNA GAUCHAT.

How many tens of thousands, if not millions, of people have visited the Australian Museum's *Indigenous Australians* gallery since it opened in 1998?

The gallery is one of Sydney's few sources of information about Indigenous issues, politics and history. Much has changed in the 14 years since the gallery's construction and, minor updates aside, it's now well due for a revamp.

Yet Indigenous Australia – with a history spanning more than 45,000 years, a diversity of cultures and a strong contemporary voice – presents many a challenge for museum planners. How do you capture such a rich part of Australian history while incorporating the contemporary voices of Indigenous communities?

A FIRST IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Early on, the Museum adopted two clear principles: make it relevant to Indigenous Australians and include the Aboriginal community in the planning process.

'We're currently developing plans for a new Indigenous learning hub to be housed in the refurbished gallery', said Indigenous Education Officer Charlotte Galleguillos.

'The learning hub aims to encourage reconciliation through understanding. It will provide an interactive learning experience for visitors and it will show the realities of life in Aboriginal Australia today.'

The 'learning hub' concept was born from a philosophy that information can be delivered as an exciting and immersive educational experience. In developing the idea, the Museum has combined its exhibition and education know-how with traditional knowledge from Sydney's Indigenous communities.

It employs the latest high-tech multimedia teamed with real artefacts and real specimens from the Museum's collection. 'The hub will be a place where children for example can connect with each other, to create a sense of community by sharing stories and ideas', Charlotte said.

'In particular, we want to encourage local Indigenous children to participate in the hub. This is where they can come to learn about their ancestry, stories and beliefs and experience their own unique relationship with Country.'

'We're helping to build strong cultural links for the generations to come.'

SUPPORTING THE LEARNING HUB

Backing the hub is the Australian Museum Foundation, established solely to support the Museum and provide a sound financial base for future work.

In May this year, the Foundation hosted the inaugural fundraising dinner, *Food for Thought*, which raised a staggering \$55,000 towards the hub. Through their generous support, guests at the dinner demonstrated an overwhelming desire to assist the advancement of Indigenous education.

The hub is scheduled to begin operating in January 2013 but needs further support from the Museum's community of Members, friends and well-wishers to make it a reality. If you've read this far, why not consider making a tax-deductible donation towards the learning hub?

By supporting the hub, you'll be taking a step towards reconciliation in Australia and helping to create a valuable resource for generations to come.

ANNA GAUCHAT DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

WEBLINK >

Were you at the dinner? To see photos from the recent AMF Dinner *Food for Thought* visit www.facebook.com/australianmuseum.



SUPPORTING THE LEARNING HUB

Donations to the Australian Museum Foundation of \$2 or more are tax deductible and assist the Museum to continue its valuable scientific research, education and collection programs. To make a donation or for more information, please contact the Development Branch on 02 9320 6216.

Left

Children from the Kool Kids Club, an after-school program for inner-city children run by the Weave Organisation, meet Education Officer Charlotte Galleguillos at the Australian Museum. Photo by Carl Bento.

Above

Kim Mackay AO welcomes guests to *Food for Thought*, the Australian Museum Foundation's inaugural fundraising dinner, held in May 2012. Photo by Stuart Humphreys.



Left
White (Sulphur-crested)
Cockatoo, *Cacatua galerita*
© Houghton Library, Harvard
University. MS Typ 55.9 (15)



edward lear DOWN UNDER

POET AND ILLUSTRATOR EDWARD LEAR PAINTED MANY AUSTRALIAN BIRDS AND MAMMALS WITHOUT EVER SETTING FOOT IN THE COUNTRY. JOIN ART CURATOR **ROBERT MCCrackEN PECK** AS HE REVEALS LEAR'S FASCINATION WITH AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE.

Edward Lear is fondly remembered as an ingenious nonsense poet, an engaging travel writer and a painter of luminous landscapes in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Often overshadowed by the enormity of these achievements is his remarkable success as a scientific illustrator. Lear's early immersion in the world of science did much to shape the rest of his extraordinary life. Although he never visited Australia, Lear seemed to have a special interest in the continent's birds and animals and singled them out for special attention during his decade-long focus on natural history.

ZOO

The twentieth of 21 children, Edward Lear was born to a prosperous middle-class family in 1821 in the village of Holloway, just north of London, but was raised by his oldest sister, Ann, after his family suffered financial ruin when Lear was just four. With Ann's encouragement, he began his artistic career at a very young age by drawing what he described as 'uncommon queer shop-sketches, ... coloring prints, screens, fans ... [and] making morbid

disease drawings for hospitals and certain doctors of physic'. The work was hardly inspiring, but it generated a modest income and encouraged Lear to believe he might one day gain financial independence through his brush, pen and pencil.

As a teenager, in the late 1820s, he shifted his artistic focus from the lifeless subjects of the factory and hospital ward to the far more appealing, and demonstrably vital, occupants of London's Zoological Gardens. There he was particularly attracted to the exotic birds and animals sent from Australia and many other British colonies.

At the newly built aviary in Regents Park, and at the Zoological Society's administrative headquarters on Bruton Street, he made a series of life studies that would earn him commissions to illustrate books of natural history by many of England's leading naturalists. Most importantly, his first-hand observations enabled him to publish his own groundbreaking monograph on parrots, *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots* from 1830 to 1832.

Lear quickly developed a flair for capturing the distinctive personalities of his avian subjects, including Australian cockatoos, cockatiels, parrots and parakeets. His natural history paintings combined scientific accuracy with an artistic verve rarely seen in the science tomes of the period and established Lear as one of the most talented wildlife artists of his day. His *Parrots* monograph



set a new standard for artistic excellence in scientific publishing. Remarkably, its creator was just 19 years old at the time he presented his book to the world.

MENAGERIE

Parrots drew enthusiastic praise from critics but was not a commercial success. Within a few years of its publication, Lear was happy to sell his inventory of unsold plates to John Gould (1804–81), then chief taxidermist at the Zoological Society. Gould had recently begun his parallel career as an ornithological publisher. He recognised Lear’s enormous talent for illustration and soon employed him to create plates for his own series of large-format bird books.

Among other admirers of Lear’s work was Lord Edward Stanley (1775–1851), who was president of the Zoological Society when Lear first sought permission to sketch in its aviary. Stanley (after 1834, the 13th Earl of Derby) had a collection of exotic birds and animals, many from Australia, which he kept in a large private menagerie at Knowsley Hall, his family’s estate near Liverpool. Stanley extended an invitation to Lear to make paintings of his animals, which Lear accepted enthusiastically.

Beginning in 1830 and for the next seven years, Lear divided his time between London, where he continued to create illustrations for John Gould and others, and Liverpool, where he made more

“Fortunately, he left behind an extraordinary collection of paintings, many of which documented the wildlife of Australia.”

than 100 life portraits of the birds, mammals and reptiles in Lord Stanley’s remarkable menagerie. It was during his extended visits to Knowsley Hall that Lear began to create the endearing limericks and other nonsense verse for which he is so well known today. Self-illustrated in a loose, seemingly childlike style, these flights of whimsy may have provided Lear with just the relief he needed from the pressures of his demanding scientific commissions.

TRAVEL

Despite his enormous talent for natural history illustration, and the secure livelihood it could have provided him, Lear found the close, exacting nature of that work both physically challenging and, over time, emotionally unfulfilling. His few surviving letters from this period reveal that he longed to devote more time to travel and to exploring the pleasures of landscape painting.





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Thylacine *Thylacinus cynocephalus* © Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

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Tasmanian Devil, *Sarcophilus harrisii* (private collection) and Spotted-tailed Quoll, *Dasyurus maculatus*, © Houghton Library, Harvard University. MS Typ 55.12 (fol. 8)

Above

Brush-tailed Bettong (Yowie or Woylie), *Bettongia penicillata* © Houghton Library, Harvard University. MS Typ 55.12 (fol. 9)

Right

Edward Lear by Wilhelm Nicolai Marstrand, pencil, 1840 © National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG 3055

A generous offer by Lord Stanley and his cousin Robert Hornby to send Lear to Rome in 1838 gave the young artist the chance he had been hoping for and brought to a close his short but distinguished career as a natural history illustrator. Claiming poor eyesight, Lear never returned to the professional field in which he had established his first international reputation only six years before. Fortunately, he left behind an extraordinary collection of paintings, many of which documented the wildlife of Australia.

A selection of these are reproduced here, some for the first time. They are offered in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Edward Lear's birth.

ROBERT MCCracken PECK IS CURATOR OF ART AND ARTIFACTS AND SENIOR FELLOW AT THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES OF DREXEL UNIVERSITY IN PHILADELPHIA. EARLIER THIS YEAR HE CURATED AN EXHIBITION OF EDWARD LEAR'S NATURAL HISTORY PAINTINGS AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S HOUGHTON LIBRARY.

Further reading

S Hyman, 1989. *Edward Lear's Birds*. Longmeadow Press, Stamford, CT, USA.
V Noakes, 2004. *Edward Lear: The Life of a Wanderer*. The History Press, Stroud, UK.
RM Peck, 2011. The Natural History of Edward Lear. *Harvard Library Bulletin* 22, 2–3.
RM Peck, 2012. The wilder side of Edward Lear. *Nature* 485, 36–38.

WEBLINK >

See more of Lear's Australian animals at www.australianmuseum.net.au/explore-magazine, with kind thanks to Houghton Library, Harvard University.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY EDWARD LEAR!

The Australian Museum's Rare Book collection holds several items to which Lear contributed, including *Gleanings from the Menagerie and Aviary at Knowsley Hall* (1846); John Gould's *Monograph of the Ramphastidae* (2nd ed. 1854); *Illustrations of British Ornithology* (1834); James Sowerby's *Tortoises, Terrapins and Turtles* (1872) (for which Lear prepared the lithographic plates); and *The Naturalist's Library* by Sir William Jardine (1833–41).

The Library also holds a lavish 2009 facsimile copy of Lear's monograph *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots* (1832).

To mark Lear's 200th birthday, the Research Library is hosting a small display of some of these rare books. Australian Museum Members can view the display during normal business hours by appointment only, phone 02 9320 6384.

EMMA GRAY, ACTING MANAGER, RESEARCH LIBRARY

Magazines from 1972 in the Museum's Research Library document the Tent Embassy and its establishment. Photo by Stuart Humphreys.

ON 26 JANUARY 1972, FOUR MEN SET UP A BEACH UMBRELLA ON THE GRASS OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT HOUSE IN CANBERRA. THEY CALLED IT THE ABORIGINAL EMBASSY.

THE *spirit* OF THE TENT EMBASSY: 40 YEARS ON

The Aboriginal Embassy was a symbol of the alienation felt by many Indigenous Australians after a landmark court case in 1971. *Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd* (also known as the Gove land rights case) was the first Indigenous land rights case to be heard in Australia. The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory rejected the claim that the Yolgnu people of Yirrkala had native title of the land and ruled in favour of *terra nullius*, paving the way for Nabalco, a mining company, to commercially develop the land.

The conservative government of Prime Minister Billy McMahon released a statement on Australia Day 1972 stating that there would be no Aboriginal title to land. Instead, they encouraged Indigenous people to apply to lease their traditional lands.

ACTIVISTS

That day, four Indigenous activists from Sydney – Michael Anderson, Tony Coorey, Billy Craigie and Bert Williams – set up the Aboriginal Embassy. Anderson told *The Australian* newspaper, 'The land was

taken from us by force... we shouldn't have to lease it... our spiritual beliefs are connected with the land'.

Over the next few months, the men were joined by supporters from across the country. The lone umbrella became dozens of tents, and the protest was supported by university students, visiting diplomats and sections of the press.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Government passed legislation that made it illegal to camp on unleased land in Canberra. This meant that the Embassy protestors were now trespassing and it paved the way for the police to move in, dismantle the tents and arrest a number of protesters, which they did just after National Aborigines Day (NAIDOC) in July 1972.

Not to be deterred, protesters erected the tents again, and again the police moved in and dismantled them. A week later, the number of protestors had grown from around 200 to 2000. The confrontations between the protestors and police were controversial, with many members of

the general public and politicians siding with the activists.

PROGRESS

Many of the tensions were finally resolved with an election that year bringing the progressive Labor Government of Gough Whitlam to power. Whitlam oversaw many reforms, including the return of land, greater reconciliation with Indigenous people and dismantling of the White Australia policy. Twenty years later, the Mabo case finally threw out the concept of *terra nullius*, allowing Indigenous groups to legally claim ownership of their traditional lands.

The Tent Embassy still stands on the lawn opposite Old Parliament House as a symbol of Indigenous demands for representation and a voice in Australian society.

EMMA GRAY MANAGER, AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM RESEARCH LIBRARY

The Australian Museum Research Library has a selection of Indigenous magazines and other media referencing the Aboriginal Embassy. Members can view the material by appointment.



Ken Coles AM continues to champion research at Lizard Island. Photo by Stuart Humphreys.

RIDING THE *wave*



SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1978, THE LIZARD ISLAND REEF RESEARCH FOUNDATION HAS RAISED OVER \$8 MILLION TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM LIZARD ISLAND RESEARCH STATION. HERE, OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE FOUNDATION, **KEN COLES AM**, REFLECTS ON HIS 20 YEARS AT THE HELM.

Ken Coles first visited Lizard Island in 1993 as newly elected Chairman of the Lizard Island Reef Research Foundation. It's a visit that spurred him into action.

'When I started, one of the first things we did was go up to Lizard [Island] and have a look at what the research station was [like] and I was appalled at the houses. We were entertained on a back veranda which had a dirt floor and, I think, even a canvas top. It was pretty makeshift and I thought, "this is no good; we have to fix this".'

He immediately started an appeal, asking ten people to donate \$5000 a year for four years. The money raised was sufficient to build two permanent houses on the island. With this more substantial accommodation in place, the research station's contract staff could be permanently employed by the Museum.

'It made a difference to their attitude towards the place immediately', says Ken.

INFRASTRUCTURE

That increased commitment to the research station has continued through Ken's tenure, resulting in a number of infrastructure and development projects.

The most transformative of these has been the 30th Anniversary Development, an appeal headed by Charlie Shuetrim AM, and today the station boasts four shared and self-contained houses, a fleet of 13 boats and a catamaran, two laboratories, an aquarium system and a library.

The Foundation continues to play a crucial role in raising funds to help cover the research station's running costs and infrastructure, as well as fellowships for visiting researchers, but it stays away from directing research priorities.

'My personal belief is that you shouldn't direct where [the funds go]. The scientists know enough about what they want to do without us interfering. Sometimes the very best science comes out of left field... that was not envisaged'.

FELLOWSHIPS

The Foundation provides funds for five research fellowships at Lizard Island – vital to the research station, says Ken, as they not only attract the best early-career

researchers from around the world but also provide an investment in the long-term viability of the station.

'Fellows often return to Lizard Island to conduct further research projects, paying bench fees and contributing to the running costs of the facility, so money raised through the Foundation and its members has a roll-on effect for years and even decades.'

Twenty years on, Ken remains a passionate champion of the research at Lizard Island and is a life member of the Lizard Island Reef Research Foundation.

He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2000 for service to business, industry and the community. In further recognition, in 2007 a group of German researchers visiting Lizard Island named a new species of nudibranch (sea slug) in his honour: *Ercolania kencolesi*.

In his farewell speech, Ken likened his time as Chairman to the privilege of riding a 'large, smooth, rolling wave'.

'It was an incredible ride.'

MAXINE KAUTER PROJECT COORDINATOR

WEBLINK >

To find out more about research fellowships at Lizard Island, visit www.australianmuseum.net.au/Awards-Fellowships.

PUT THE MESSAGE IN A BOX



A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE? NOT QUITE – BUT MYSTERIOUS CRATES HAVE BEGUN ARRIVING ALL ACROSS NEW SOUTH WALES TO DELIVER A VERY IMPORTANT MESSAGE, SAYS MUSEUM2YOU PROJECT OFFICER ISABELLE KINGSLEY.

The climate is changing, life on Earth is affected and we all need to do something about it. But how does a museum spread such an important message to the wider community?

The answer is Museum2you, an environmental education program that, as the name suggests, brings the Australian Museum to you. In a box.

‘We need to build environmental citizens who care about issues like saving water and energy, reducing waste and looking after our biodiversity’, said Karen Player, Coordinator of Museum Outreach.

‘It’s important for the Museum to engage communities in learning about these issues and empower them to be better custodians of the planet.’

The contents of Museum2you boxes do just that. Each focuses on the environmental issues of climate change, sustainability and biodiversity and contains real museum specimens, resources and tools for hands-on investigation. They’re full of practical ideas for people of all

ages (but are not to be confused with the Museum’s popular Museum in a Box program for schools).

BUGS

One of the first to use Museum2you was the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in Waverton. A group of 25 people of all ages took part in a backyard biodiversity workshop, spending a leisurely morning surveying invertebrates from a local stream, identifying spiders by their webs and searching for insects.

‘She’d happily stay here all day looking for bugs’, said one proud grandad as he watched his five-year-old looking for creepy crawlies in a tray of leaf litter. ‘I think we have a little entomologist on our hands.’

Taking a more sophisticated approach, the Coal Loader also hosted a Café Scientifique-style evening where more than 30 adults debated the topic ‘Feral: friend or foe?’. After looking through the Museum2you display, the group settled down to enjoy a few drinks while discussing the pros and cons of introduced species with a panel of experts.

ACTION

Launched in May 2012, Museum2you boxes have already travelled to Tamworth, the Blue Mountains, North Sydney, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Mulwala and Orange,

with bookings filling fast for many other suburban and regional centres.

‘It’s a wonderful display with excellent resources and is just a great idea!’ said Hayley Bates, Urban Sustainability Program Project Officer at North Sydney Council and recent Museum2you host.

‘The Museum2you resource is what’s needed to help community groups become community action groups.’

As communities and as individuals, we need to take action and consider how we use, value and protect our fragile natural world. The choices we make now about how we live will determine our planet’s future and its ability to sustain life. It’s time to send out an SOS – a message in a box.

ISABELLE KINGSLEY MUSEUM2YOU EDUCATION PROJECT OFFICER

Museum2you is available for hire by community organisations across NSW. It was developed by the Australian Museum and assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust.

WEBLINK >

Find out how to book Museum2you at www.australianmuseum.net.au/Museum-2-You

Above Isabelle Kingsley (right) discusses environmental solutions with a visitor to the Museum2you display at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability in Waverton, May 2012. Photo by Stuart Humphreys.

MARTYN ROBINSON
IS THE MUSEUM'S
RESIDENT NATURALIST

SLIMY SLITHERERS



HANGING BY A THREAD

Slime makes gliding easier for snails and slugs but the slime trail they leave behind is not very thick at all. It doesn't need to be – just enough to protect the delicate moist skin on the 'foot' of the snail or slug from the potentially abrasive ground it is travelling over. It also acts as an adhesive to 'stick' the mollusc onto the surface.

Any more would be a waste of both valuable slime and – more importantly – the water that makes up most of its bulk (which is why slimy animals generally live in moist areas). This stickiness enables the snail or slug to climb smooth surfaces or even travel upside down, despite having no limbs to grip with.

So how does the snail or slug actually move? Well, the under-surface of the foot is covered in tiny hair-like cilia which the mollusc can move backwards and forwards in a wave-like pattern.

The cilia reach forward to make contact with the slime-covered surface that the mollusc is travelling over and then push backwards, sliding the snail forwards over its slime. The wave starts at the tail end and moves forward, allowing the animal to slide over the coating of slime produced for this purpose.

To see this action for yourself, just place a snail on a windowpane and watch it from the other side as the 'waves' travel up the body. Because the 'silvery trail' shrivels to virtually nothing and disintegrates, you might be surprised to learn how strong and protective it is. The biggest land snail you

can find can easily and safely crawl up and over the sharp edge of a razor blade with no ill effects.

Even more surprising, the large and comparatively heavy Leopard Slugs, *Limax maximus*, suspend themselves in mid-air, and mate, all while suspended from a thin strand of slime like a bungy rope.

Don't try this at home!

WHO'S THE SLIMIEST OF THEM ALL?

The animals having the best descriptive, and perhaps most numerous, common names are the hagfishes.

Hagfishes, found in the deep oceans of the world including around Australia, are very primitive in most of their features, having skeletons of cartilage rather than bone, light-sensitive spots instead of eyes, and a sort of rasping 'tongue' apparatus instead of jaws. This, in no way, means that they are at a disadvantage, however; they simply came up with an excellent biology and physiology very early on and didn't need to change.

Their diet is mainly the sunken bodies of all the other animals that die and drift to the bottom of the ocean. Their extremely flexible bodies and rasping tongues allows them to squirm their way inside these corpses and eat them from the inside out.

But perhaps one of their most successful and memorable features, as far as humans are concerned, is their ability to produce vast, instantaneous quantities of slime. Indeed, hagfishes are the world's slimiest animals and this has given them a wealth

of other descriptive common names, such as slime fish, slime hags, snot eels, slime eels, hag eels and snot hags.

Deep-sea trawlers and crab-pot tenders generally hate them as they can render the nets and crab pots ineffective and most difficult to clean due to the sticky, stringy slime they leave behind.

A small hagfish can turn a bucketful of seawater into jelly in seconds and a garbage binful in minutes. So how does a relatively small and slender fish produce volumes of slime so much larger than its own body bulk?

The answer lies in the structure of the slime itself. Glands in the hagfish skin produce a concentrated micro-fibrous slime which has a strong ability to combine with water. As soon as it touches water, the filaments and fibres of slime unravel and expand to form a large, gelatinous, sticky, slimy net.

This not only lubricates the already slimy hagfish, making it hard to grip, but it also tends to choke would-be predators and clog their gills. It is a lesson they remember for a long time and don't tend to bother hagfish again.

'Ah, but doesn't the hagfish have gills itself? I hear you say? 'Wouldn't it choke on its own slime?'

Well that's where another interesting but simple adaptation of hagfishes comes in: they can tie themselves in knots. Starting at the head or tail end, according to need, they form a 'granny knot' and run it down



the body until either the head or tail is pulled out of the knot and the animal is straight again.

Any predator still with a grip on a hagfish has the body pulled out of its jaws by the travelling knot and retains only a mouthful of gagging slime.

When feeding, the hagfish grips a mouthful of food and pulls it through the knot along with the hagfish's head to tear off a bite-sized chunk.

Lastly its protective but gill-clogging slime can be stripped off the hagfishes body and discarded at the tail end by this same travelling knot.

So these may be relatively simple animals but they are far from inefficient.

WEBLINK >

See hagfishes in action at www.australianmuseum.net.au/BlogPost/Fish-Bits/Amazing-new-hagfish-behaviour

Opposite

Leopard Slugs, *Limax maximus*, suspend themselves in mid-air and mate hanging from a thin strand of slime. Photo © Torsten Hiddessen.

Above

Mottled hagfish, *Eptatretus* sp. Photo by Carl Struthers © Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Send your query to the Search & Discover team, email sand@austmus.gov.au

search > DISCOVER



Q. Bill or beak? Which is correct avian terminology?

When referring to birds in general, bill or beak can usually be used interchangeably. In common usage, each may be associated with particular groups of birds – for example, the hooked beak of parrots and birds of prey and the long, slender bill of wading birds – but there is no hard and fast rule for this.

In birds, the bill (or beak) comprises the bony upper and lower jaws and the hard fingernail-like covering sheath. These terms are also used with some other animal groups – the Platypus has a bill, but the Echidna has a beak, as do turtles, octopuses, some fish and dinosaurs and a few insects.

KELLIE HARRIS



Q. Extinct or just hiding? We think this small mouse from far-western New South Wales might be a rare native species. Is it?

Based on the photo and description we are pretty sure it is the Desert Mouse, *Pseudomys desertor*, a critically endangered species in NSW and one that until recently hadn't been collected in the State since 1857! Our Mammals Collections Manager, Dr Sandy Ingleby, requested a tissue sample which has confirmed the presence of this species in its former range.

In 1866, Museum Director Gerard Krefft described the mouse's range from the Murray-Darling to Western Australia, but since European arrival it has contracted to the central deserts. After 50 years of absence a mammal can be declared extinct, but in this case the Desert Mouse appears to be hanging on in NSW!

STEVE VOGEL

WEBLINK >

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/determinations/desertmouseFD.htm>



Q. Can eels climb a dam wall?

When I first heard about eels climbing Warragamba Dam, I struggled to believe it, having recently seen the sheer size of the structure. I already knew of their massive marine journeys to spawn through projects I had completed on eel traps (called *hinaki*) in New Zealand, but I decided to look into their life cycle more closely.

I found that they go through physical changes to aid them in their journey across the Pacific to spawning grounds near New Caledonia. Their pectoral fins enlarge, their eyes grow larger and the pigments change so they can see better in the sea.

After hatching, the larval eels (called *leptocephali*) cross the ocean to reach coastal rivers, where they become more eel-like (elvers) and swim upstream. They don't actually climb Warragamba Dam, but ascend a smaller side stream and even travel overland for a short distance to reach the lake behind the dam, where they can grow to adult size – typically up to two metres.

LOGAN METCALFE

The Channel-billed Cuckoo, *Scythrops novaehollandiae*, has a long bill with a beaked tip. Photo by Stuart Humphreys.

The Desert Mouse has been seen in New South Wales for the first time since 1857. Photo by Ray Dayman © NPWS.

A Longfin Eel measuring 145 cm from the upper Nepean River. Photo by Jonathon Doyle © Industries NSW.

THEY'RE *wrapped*



THEY'RE WRAPPED

No longer on display, and looking like something from television's *The X-files*, these specimens are going through a period of treatment that suffocates any tiny critters that may have hitched a ride in the hope of a free meal. I chose these images because of their surreal quality. What do you think?

CATE LOWE PHOTO EDITOR



Previous page

Male lion, *Panthera leo*.
Photo by James King.

Left

Rhinoceros being moved by
conservator Michael Kelly.
In this form of treatment,
specimens are kept in a
low-oxygen atmosphere for a
number of weeks to kill pests.
Photo by Stuart Humphreys.

Top

European Rabbit,
Oryctolagus cuniculus.
Photo by James King.

Bottom

Gibson's Albatross, *Diomedea
gibsoni*. Photo by James King.





A PAIR OF CARVED SANDSTONE GATEPOSTS AND WROUGHT-IRON GATES ON SYDNEY'S MACQUARIE STREET COMMEMORATE THE GARDEN PALACE EXHIBITION BUILDING DESTROYED IN AN INFERNO 140 YEARS AGO, WRITES THE MUSEUM'S **STAN FLOREK**.



fire IN THE PALACE

Built to house the Sydney International Exhibition in 1879, the Garden Palace was created by James Barnet, government architect and designer of the General Post Office, Customs House and the Australian Museum's College Street building.

The exhibition itself was a grand event, an opportunity for the prosperous colony of New South Wales to showcase its industrial and economic achievements, and its unique cultural character alongside exhibits from Britain, the United States, Germany and numerous other countries.

Unlike Barnet's other colonial architecture in sandstone, the exhibition building was built hastily of rather inferior materials – timber, galvanised iron and glass. On the other hand, it boasted new-fangled electric lighting, one of the first in the colony so equipped.

Whether from an electrical fault or otherwise, within an hour on the morning of 22 September 1882 fire had reduced the building to a pile of smouldering rubble –

taking with it the Australian Museum's extensive collection of cultural objects and many other exhibits.

RICH DISPLAY

The story of the Garden Palace, well-known in Sydney's cultural circles, bears retelling as new detective work reveals a handful of early objects that escaped the fate of many.

International exhibitions (precursors of the modern 'expo') were popular in Western countries at the time. In customary fashion, the 1879 exhibition highlighted the colony's achievements in agriculture, arts and commerce. The exhibition's Ethnological Court showed over 3000 artefacts, nearly 2000 of which were from the Australian Museum.

Such a rich display would not have been possible, stated the official record of the exhibition, if not for the Trustees of the Australian Museum who 'lent their very comprehensive ethnological collection, usually displayed in that institution as part of its permanent treasures'.

“Following the fire, curators made a special effort ... and within eight years had acquired more than 16,000 artefacts.”

Imagine then what a devastating blow the fire of 1882 must have been. In one fell swoop, the Museum lost its entire ethnology collection built up over 50 years, with many irreplaceable objects from the indigenous cultures of Oceania and beyond. Or did it?

LOST

Finding out exactly what was lost in the fire is not necessarily easy because records and inventories from this period are often vague. The following examples offer some insight into what the collection contained and its strengths before 1882.

Top

The former Garden Palace exhibition building on Macquarie Street. Photo by Sam Hood, Dixon Galleries, State Library of NSW. SPF/268

Below

A rare photograph of the Ethnological Court showing some of the 2000 cultural artefacts destroyed in the fire. Australian Museum Archives. v11460



The Museum's earliest collection of Australian Indigenous artefacts consisted of 23 weapons, baskets and body adornments from the Darling River area of western New South Wales. They were assembled by explorer Thomas Livingston Mitchell (1792–1855), Surveyor General, on his 1835 pioneering expedition to the interior. Another early collection of 50 artefacts came from an expedition to the Torres Strait in 1836 led by Commander Morgan Lewis and marine explorer Philip Parker King. They had set out to search for survivors of the *Charles Eaton*, which had sunk there two years earlier.

Other important collections included over 250 artefacts from the Central Province of Papua New Guinea collected between 1876 and 1878 by the naturalist and explorer Andrew Goldie (1840–91), and over 100 artefacts from Port Darwin and Port Essington collected in 1878 by the Museum's Alexander Morton, who also collected about 100 artefacts from Yule Island, Papua New Guinea.

These and other early collections from the indigenous cultures of Papua New Guinea, Torres Strait and the Northern Territory were prominent in the 1879 exhibition.

CATALOGUE

The official exhibition catalogue is of only limited value in determining what was lost, with entries such as 'Collection of Spears', 'Fish-hooks' and 'Boomerangs' being too vague to identify individual items.

Other entries are more specific, however. On display were five shields from Mitchell's 1835–36 Darling River expeditions. The catalogue uses the same unusual name for these items (*heileman*, of Aboriginal origin) that Mitchell used in his book *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia*, and the name also appears in the Museum's acquisition file. The catalogue lists an 'enormous bamboo pipe' collected during Commander Lewis's rescue mission to Torres Strait – the same term used in

both the Museum acquisition document and a book recounting the 1836 expedition. It must be in our human nature to perpetuate odd terms and phrases attached to objects beyond our daily use, but in this case they help identify the same objects in different documents – and confirm their fate.

SURVIVAL

These losses were catastrophic, but history is usually more complex than it looks on the surface, and from the ashes of destruction there are a few stories of survival that should be told.

The destiny of these artefacts was forged much earlier as Museum curators attempted to build representations of various world cultures through exchange programs. An early partner, dating back to 1857, was the Copenhagen Museum, now the National Museum of Denmark. In 1859, the Australian Museum exchanged eight objects with Copenhagen – masks, drums, body ornaments and sculptures from none other than the 1836 rescue mission to Torres Strait – for 70 specimens of ‘ancient Scandinavian weapons, tools and utensils’.

So it is that a handful of artefacts from Torres Strait avoided an inferno and went on to survive the turbulence of European history in the 19th and 20th centuries. Photos recently obtained from the National Museum of Denmark neatly match the descriptions of these objects in an 1836 book by WE Brockett: a ‘rudely carved imitation of fish – [an] animal called the *Duyong* or sea-cow’ from Mer (Murray Island); a mask described as ‘a frightful representation of the human countenance [see photo, right], rendered still more so by blackened and adorned with red and white paint’; and another with ‘tastefully arranged cowrie shells.’

It is a pity that these, some of the earliest collected Australian Indigenous artefacts, are no longer kept in the Australian

Museum; but, on the other hand, it is good to know they are intact, helping other people across the world learn about Indigenous Australians.

FATE

In other good news, a set of 18 arrows and a pubic cover brought from Mer in 1836 were excluded from the exhibition and survived perfectly well, stored snugly in the Museum stores. And so too it appears that some spears from the Morton collection from Port Darwin and Port Essington were excluded, perhaps during the hasty preparations for the exhibition. In fact, curators of the Museum’s cultural collections have identified about 100 artefacts, mostly from the Pacific region, which, for various reasons, were not destroyed by the fire.

Following the fire, curators made a special effort to rebuild the ethnology collections, and within eight years had acquired more than 16,000 artefacts – the largest anthropology collecting enterprise in the history of the Museum. By then, however, many original artefacts, equivalent to those lost in the fire, could no longer be obtained. As the official record of the exhibition noted, ominously, it would indeed be ‘...almost impossible to get such a large collection together again.’

DR STAN FLOREK DATABASE MANAGER,
CULTURAL COLLECTIONS

Further reading

Official Catalogue of the General Ethnological Collection: Sydney International Exhibition, 1879.

WE Brockett, 1836. *Narrative of a voyage from Sydney to Torres Straits, in search of the survivors of the Charles Eaton; in His Majesty's colonial schooner Isabella, CM Lewis, Commander. Henry Bull, Sydney.*

TL Mitchell, 1836. *Three Expeditions into Interior of Eastern Australia.* T&W Boone, London.

WEBLINK >

See more artefacts from the Garden Palace story at www.australianmuseum.net.au/explore-magazine.



Above

Tracings of bark paintings from Port Essington (1878). A set of nine early Aboriginal paintings on bark from Port Essington in the Northern Territory destroyed in the fire were among the first in any collection and the first to be exhibited to the public. Australian Museum Archives.

Top

This mask from Torres Strait was one of eight early Indigenous artefacts to escape destruction in the fire. Photo by Bente Wolff © National Museum of Denmark.

making **LAND WORK?**



TWO SMALL PIECES OF SANDALWOOD COLLECTED ON THE ISLAND OF ERROMANGO, VANUATU HELP TO PROVIDE A KEY FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL TIES BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND THEIR LAND.

These two short branches of seemingly ordinary wood seem out of place in the Australian Museum's cultural stores, surrounded by shelves filled with all manner of cultural artworks and artefacts. Yet they reveal much about the history of conflict between Western and traditional indigenous attitudes towards land and natural resources – conflict that continues in various guises today.

INCENSE

Heavy and fine-grained, but having now lost their wonderful fragrance, these pieces of sandalwood, *Santalum austrocaledonicum*, were collected from the island of Erromango, Vanuatu in the early 1900s by missionary Rev Dr HA Robertson.

Sandalwood, widely used in furniture and incense across Asia, was much in demand in the nineteenth century. Enormous profits could be made from selling sandalwood to China, and Erromango was a rare source of a particularly sought-after, fragrant variety.

Western traders were initially content to offer modest payments for cutting this valuable resource. But from 1829 to 1865 Erromango and its peoples were increasingly exploited to enable foreigners to extract maximum sandalwood at minimal cost.

From the late 1880s, foreign companies based in Nouméa and Melbourne moved in, laying claim to vast areas of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu). Such a situation was completely incomprehensible to the indigenous inhabitants and traditional custodians of these lands – ni-Vanuatu. Combined with the introduction of European diseases, alcohol, firearms and the early ravages of 'blackbirding' (labour recruiting), the population of Erromango fell from an estimated pre-contact level of over 10,000 to less than 400 by 1921. Over the same period the whole of Vanuatu suffered a similar, catastrophic population decline from possibly 700,000 to around 40,000 by the late 1920s.

It was a story repeated over much of coastal Melanesia and one might thus say that, for many Melanesians, the early 'benefits of contact with Western civilisation' were extremely doubtful.

TRADITIONAL LAND RIGHTS

In Western economic systems, land has always been a commodity – something to be bought, sold ... or usurped. Land with no written 'title' or in an 'unused' natural state is essentially considered uninhabited no-man's land, *terra nullius* or free for the taking.

By contrast, ni-Vanuatu have, from birth, an inalienable and automatic right to use and enjoy their traditional lands. These rights are communally held and cannot be sold off, the ultimate rights remaining permanently with the traditional custodians. In certain areas, one could even go as far as to say that it is the land that 'owns' the people, rather than the other way around.

This may over-simplify the vast number of differing and extremely complex Melanesian land custodianship systems still in existence today, but most have in common a respect for land as a living force that manifests itself in its people and its cultures.

Globally, the rights of indigenous peoples to their traditional lands are recognised by the September 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Yet the push to alienate land from its traditional owners continues as governments, developers and investors attempt to 'reform' traditional, communal, oral-based land tenure systems worldwide – in particular in Africa, South America and Melanesia. In their place, they are proposing forms of land agreements that could eventually be misused to result in the loss of traditional ownership.

VANUATU TODAY

One such proposal is 'Making Land Work', an aid initiative that aims to delineate traditional land boundaries and areas for agriculture, 'zoning' and subdivision. Now accepted by the Vanuatu Government and called 'Mama Graon', the project continues to raise concerns among many traditional land custodians, and a cursory look at recent Vanuatu history explains why.

In the 1970s, the Anglo-French Condominium government of what was then the New Hebrides banned the subdivision of land in response to an attempt by American investors to subdivide and sell land to US Vietnam War veterans.

This same threat to traditional land rights also inspired the formation of indigenous political parties and demands for autonomy. When Vanuatu achieved its independence in 1980, all land reverted to the traditional custodians, and this fact is enshrined in the nation's Constitution.

That should have been the end of it, but by the late 1990s, pressure on traditional land rights was growing again. In 2000, an Act of Parliament to allow strata titles in the capital's one and only high-rise building, whether by accident or design, also seemed to apply to land leases.

Suddenly, subdivision was again on the agenda. It resulted in a rash of expatriate 'investors' and real estate agents leasing and subdividing land in Port Vila and coastal Efate. By the end of the decade, nearly 60 per cent of coastal Efate was in foreign hands.

“Who will be the major beneficiaries of Western-style land subdivision?”

Many ni-Vanuatu, horrified by these developments, began an organised response. Vanuatu hosted a National Land Summit in 2006 and National Land Workshop in 2009 to raise awareness of land alienation and bring public pressure on the government to protect indigenous land rights.

Emphasising that ‘land grabbing’ is rife in the region, and not just in Vanuatu, representatives from throughout Melanesia met in Madang Province, Papua New Guinea, in June 2009 to form the Melanesian Indigenous Land Defence Alliance (MILDA).

This group held its second major annual meeting in the village of Mele on Efate in 2010, resulting in the Mele Declaration, which outlines concerns and recommendations for land rights canvassed from representatives throughout the region.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Ancestral land has been working with and for Melanesians for thousands of years – and working well. When Melanesians look at Land, they see the Mother (or the Father, depending upon the culture); they see ancestors, myth, history and ritual; they see food for the descendants of that Land.

The days of sandalwood exploitation and the calamities that followed are history, and the population of Erromango has recovered to about 1600 – still a shadow of its former self but now much wiser in the ways of the West. Vanuatu’s population has nearly doubled since independence in 1980 to around 240,000, perhaps a third of its pre-Western contact level.

We should note that this recent population growth in Vanuatu has been fed and sustained by the natural expansion of the traditional agricultural economy, not the modern economic system. This growing population may eventually need access to any of its lands that have been leased and subdivided.

SOLUTION?

In this, the 20th anniversary year of the Mabo decision recognising native title in the Torres Strait, and nearly five years after the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, perhaps we should be thinking more seriously about what we really mean by ‘development’.

Do we mean promoting a good, sustainable life? Or does it mean having everyone adopt Western systems that are known to alienate people from their traditional lands and introduce poverty where none really existed before?

Vanuatu was nominated in 2006 as the ‘World’s Happiest Nation’ by the New Economics Foundation based on intense studies of 178 nations worldwide. Rural Melanesia was undoubtedly the area of the world least affected by the 2008 (and ongoing) Global Financial Crisis. Over 80 per cent of the populations live on ancestral land and are largely self-sufficient.

Perhaps we can learn something here – that ours is neither the only nor the best of all possible economic systems.

Melanesians, through groups such as MILDA, are asking who will be the major beneficiaries from the implementation of Western-style land subdivision. Will it be the traditional land custodians, their families and cultures, or will it be foreign investors?

KIRK HUFFMAN HONORARY CURATOR, VANUATU CULTURAL CENTRE, PORT VILA, VANUATU AND RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM.

Further reading

T Bending & D Wilson (eds), 2012. Land rights and the rush for land. International Land Coalition, Rome.

K Huffman, 2009. Land in Vanuatu: the Mother under threat. Sydney University News, 19, pp 4–6.

F Pearce, 2012. The landgrabbers: the new fight over who owns the Earth. Beacon Press, Boston.

WEBLINK >

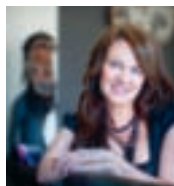
What do you think? Leave your comments on our blog at www.australianmuseum.net.au/Explore-magazine

DEDICATION

This article is dedicated to the spirits and memory of the following recently-deceased ni-Vanuatu: olfala Kaidip’sa of Nemel Venelu, SW Malakula (d. April 2012); Chief Kuaru of Yanaolaol, SW Tanna (d. Oct. 2011); Chief Silas Ngarileo (Vira Doro) of Labultamata, N. Pentecost (d. Sept. 2011); Douglas Kalotiti of Leleppa (d. April 2011); Fidel Yoringmal of Wala, NE Malakula (d. Jan. 2011); Chief Matthias Batick of Nemel Minduwo, SW Malakula (d. April 2010); Chief Tom Kiri of Umponyelo(n)gi, S. Erromango (d. June 2006).

Page 30

Sandalwood from Erromango was widely exploited by Western traders in the 1800s. Photo by Stuart Humphreys. E12420 & E22590



We are beyond excited to be bringing *Alexander the Great: 2000 years of treasures* to you.

It's the largest exhibition ever seen in Australia from the State Hermitage in St Petersburg, and it's showing only at the Australian Museum in Sydney.

FOOTSTEPS

To complement the exhibition, we've planned a whole series of fun and informative events for Members, with spectacular shows, edifying lectures, exclusive access behind the scenes and even a themed sleepover for the kids.

And if you're feeling adventurous, why not join *In the footsteps of Alexander*, our tour in 2013 through Greece and Turkey led by historian Chris Matthew?

In other news, we have a fascinating Night Talk on Indigenous astronomy (and a themed tour departing next year) and we welcome back expert Mike Morwood to expand on our new 'Hobbit' display, located on the grand staircase.

QR WHAT?

For tech-savvy Members, we're also trialling QR codes – simply scan the codes to your mobile device to arrive at our website for the latest event information and travel bookings.

There's a lot going on for Members in the coming months – I hope you'll join in the fun!

SERENA TODD

Executive Officer,
Australian Museum Members

Serena Todd's photo by Carl Bento.

TRAVEL *with members*



Night Sky Dreaming with Fred Watson and Ray Norris 18–26 March 2013

Gazing up into a million-star sky in outback Australia is sure to take your breath away. Indigenous Australians created stories to make sense of the heavens above and the universe around them. Join Fred Watson and Ray Norris on this ten-day, fully escorted tour through the most indigenously interesting corners of Victoria and New South Wales while unravelling the secrets of astronomy old and new.

Madagascar: Isle of Biodiversity May 2013

Madagascar is a natural history wonderland unlike any other place on Earth. Its flora and fauna have evolved in splendid isolation: chameleons, lemurs, rare and gorgeous birds and a thousand species of orchids are yours to discover in this unforgettable Members tour.

NEW!

In the footsteps of Alexander the Great

29 September to 17 October 2013

For over 2000 years Alexander the Great has excited the imagination of people around the world. Join tour leader Dr Chris Matthew (ACU) for this cultural and archaeological tour as we follow in Alexander's footsteps, exploring the very best of ancient and modern Greece: archaeological sites, museums, mountain scenery and Mediterranean sea views.

Visit www.australianmuseum.net.au/Travel-program for more information about Members tours.



Scan this code to your
mobile device to find all
Members tours

Above Mosque and pousse-pousse (rickshaws) in Antsirabe, Madagascar. Photo © Amanda Berry.

night talks

ALL NIGHT TALKS

TIME 6.30 pm

COST Members \$20, non-Members \$30

BOOKING phone 9320 6225 or
www.australianmuseum.net.au/Members

Astronomy of Indigenous Australians

Professor Ray Norris, Macquarie University

WHEN Thursday 20 September

Each of the 400 indigenous cultures in Australia has distinct mythologies, ceremonies and art forms, some of which have a strong astronomical component. Many share common traditions such as the 'emu in the sky' constellation of dark clouds, and stories about the Sun, Moon, Orion and the Pleiades. These traditions reveal a depth and cultural complexity not widely appreciated by outsiders. Explore these wonderful, mystical Aboriginal astronomical stories and traditions and their practical applications with Ray Norris.



Scan this code to your
mobile device to find all
Members events

Faunal biogeography in island SE Asia: implications for Hobbits and us

Professor Michael Morwood, University of Wollongong

WHEN Thursday 25 October

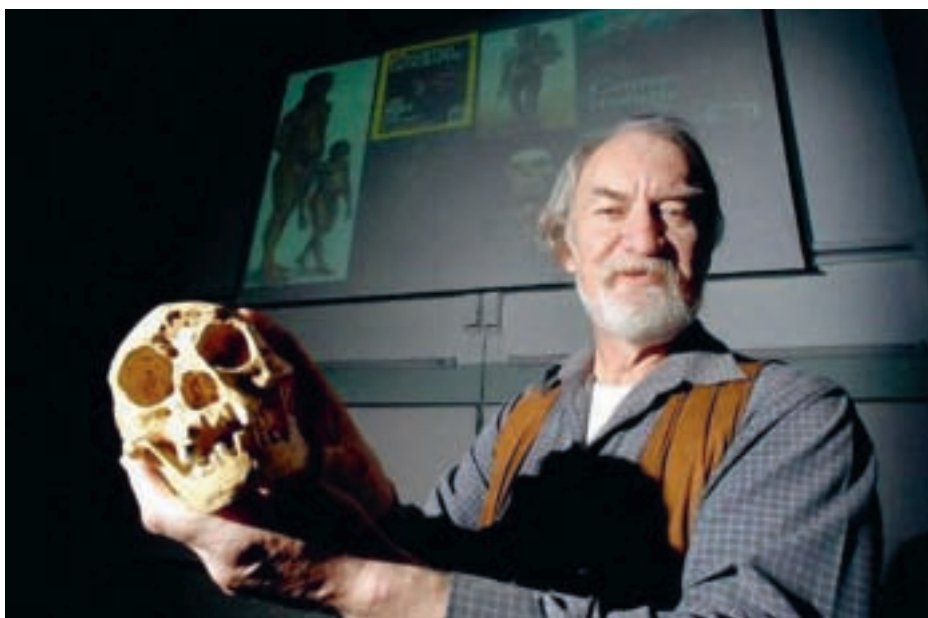
All islands are difficult colonisation prospects for land animals, some more so than others. How did Asian land animals disperse to the islands between mainland South-east Asia and Papua/Australia? Mike Morwood reveals how these lands were colonised by humans 50,000 years ago using navigable craft and sophisticated technologies.

The Adelie Land Meteorite - 100 years of Antarctic astronomy

Professor Michael Burton, UNSW

WHEN Tuesday 4 December

It's been 100 years since explorers from Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition came across a shiny black object lying on the ice – the first meteorite to be discovered in Antarctica. Today the frozen continent is a centre for astronomical investigations into cosmic background radiation and neutrinos, while its telescopes peer into the secrets of the cosmos. Join Michael Burton to discover more about the pioneering science of Antarctica.



alexander lectures

Alexander the Great: The man, the myth, the mystery

Enhance your experience of the *Alexander the Great, 2000 years of treasures* exhibition with these fascinating lectures from leading authorities.

TIME 6.30–8 pm

COST SERIES (9 lectures) Members \$160, non-Members \$260

SINGLE LECTURES Members \$20, non-Members \$30 (unless otherwise indicated)

Visit our website for more information

1 Alexander the Great: an audience with the curator

Dr Anna Trofimova, State Hermitage and Liz Cowell, Australian Museum

WHEN Wednesday 16 January

COST Members \$30 non-Members \$40 (includes exclusive exhibition viewing from 5.30 to 6.30 pm)

This very special evening begins with exclusive time in our *Alexander the Great: 2000 years of treasures* exhibition (from 5.30 pm) and refreshments. Then Director Frank Howarth will introduce curators Liz Cowell (Australian Museum) and Dr Anna Trofimova (State Hermitage, St Petersburg).

2 The Macedonian background and Alexander's life till his accession

Professor Bob Milns AM, University of Queensland

WHEN Thursday 31 January

Professor Bob Milns AM looks at the growth of Macedonia under King Philip II, Alexander's father, to 'superpower' status in the Balkans. He describes the relationship between Alexander and his father and mother, Olympias, with other major influences on his development until his accession following Philip's assassination in 336 BC.

Left Professor Mike Morwood and Hobbit skull. Photo by Alas Yorick © Mike Morwood.

Opposite Discover Alexander the man – sign up for these fascinating and authoritative lectures. Photo and editing by Erwin Olaf.

3 Not so alone – Alexander's nearest and dearest

Dr Elizabeth Baynham, University of Newcastle

WHEN Thursday 7 February

Who were Alexander's nearest and dearest? Elizabeth Baynham uncovers the characters and careers of the men and women who were personally close to the Macedonian conqueror: his mother, powerful mother figures, his wives and his male lovers and cherished friends. Discover the select few who enjoyed Alexander's intimacy and love.

4 The evolution of Hellenistic warfare

Dr Christopher Matthew, Australian Catholic University

WHEN Thursday 14 February

The Hellenistic way of war was a true innovation, changing the face of warfare in the ancient world forever. Christopher Matthew examines how such a revolutionary form of warfare came into being, who created it, what it involved and how this style of combat came to dominate the eastern Mediterranean world for nearly 300 years.

5 Alexander the Great in India (Pakistan and Afghanistan)

Professor Paul McKechnie, Macquarie University

WHEN Thursday 21 February

Discover Alexander's great campaign taking in Taxila, the Hydaspes and Hyphasis rivers and his journey down the Indus River to Patala (north-west of Hyderabad) where in 325 BC he turned west for the desert march back into Iran. Professor Paul McKechnie discusses each phase of the campaign and Alexander's lasting impact on India.

6 East and West before, during and after Alexander

Professor Margaret Miller, University of Sydney

WHEN Thursday 28 February

Professor Miller discusses how Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire added a new chapter to what was already a long story of fruitful exchange between West Asia and the



Mediterranean world. Through the riches of the Hermitage Collection, Professor Miller shows how ancient peoples learned from each other.

7 Alexander the Great or Alexander the Lucky?

Dr Chris Forbes, Macquarie University

WHEN Thursday 7 March

Alexander's remarkable achievements created a cult of personality that has lasted to our own time. But voices were soon to argue that what rules humanity's fate is no more or less than luck. Let Chris Forbes take you through ancient literature to decide on Alexander's achievements: ability or luck?

8 Imagining the divine Alexander

Dr Kenneth Sheedy, Macquarie University

WHEN Thursday 14 March

Alexander seems not to have portrayed himself as divine, though this did not stop contemporary artists from suggesting such qualities. But after his death, many portraits appeared in which his divinity was recognised. Dr Kenneth Sheedy examines how this was constructed and how it was influenced by the power struggles among his successors.

9 Alexander in popular culture

Dr Craig Barker, Sydney University

WHEN Thursday 21 March

The exploits of Alexander the Great fascinated and inspired the ancients. Positive or negative, god or demon, Alexander appears in the Bible, the Qu'ran and other ancient texts. He is depicted in modern historical fiction novels, films, plays, television, literature – and museum exhibitions. Dr Craig Barker discusses why the popularity and interest in Alexander has not dimmed in the modern world.

MORE ALEXANDER!

These Alexander-themed events provide just a glimpse of what's to come, from public programs to school resources. Get the whole picture at www.alexandersydney.com.au.

MEMBERS DISCOUNT CODE

Book your discounted Members tickets to *Alexander the Great: 2000 years of treasures* at www.alexandersydney.com.au and when prompted enter the code word 'classical'.

special events



Sleepover: A not-so-spooky Halloween

WHEN Friday 26 October

COST Members: adults \$140, children \$110
non-Members: \$170 children, \$130

AGES 5–12 years

Calling all witches, wizards and ghost hunters! Join us for a special Halloween-inspired sleepover at the Australian Museum. You will enjoy a very special pizza dinner, tour the Museum by torchlight and collect your lollies, dabble in some Halloween-inspired craft, watch a DVD with friends and then catch some ZZZs in Australia's oldest museum!

Sleepover: Heroes and heroines of the ancient world

WHEN Friday 1 February 2013

COST Members: adults \$150 children \$120,
non-Members: adults \$180 children \$140,

AGES 5–12 years

Are you a hero or heroine like Alexander the Great? Come to the Museum for a special pizza dinner, make a sword, tour the Museum by torchlight including the *Alexander the Great: 2000 years of treasures* exhibition, watch a DVD with friends and then catch some ZZZs in Australia's oldest museum!

adventurous walks

The transformation of Rhodes

WHEN Wednesday 3 October

COST Members \$15, non-Members \$20

BOOKING phone 9320 6225 or

www.australianmuseum.net.au/Members

Split by rail and road, the Rhodes peninsula in Sydney had two faces: waterfront suburbia on one side, industry on the other. Glimpse history and the future as Keith Robinson shows how this inner western suburb is being transformed from polluted wasteland to high-density apartment living.

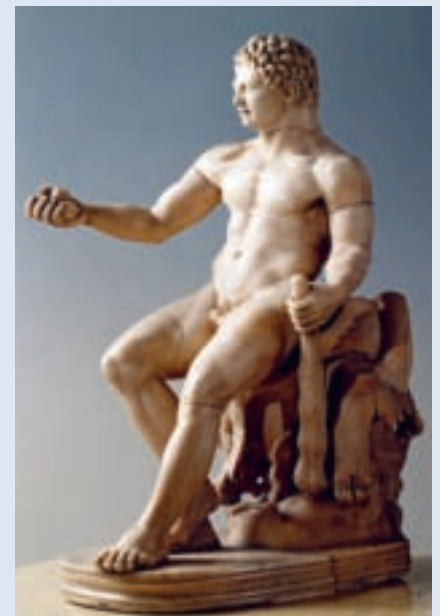
Left Spooky Museum. Photo art by Cate Lowe, original photo by Stuart Humphreys.

An evening of indulgence with Alexander: conquests, cuisine and culture

WHEN Thursday 29 November from 6.30 pm

COST Members \$85, non-Members \$95

Let Alexander beguile you with his charms on this truly fanciful evening. Come in costume and enjoy a welcome champagne cocktail, delicious Hellenistic canapés, a dramatic re-enactment by ACU drama students and then, appetites sated and thirst for knowledge whetted, allow yourself to be consumed by the Museum's latest exhibition *Alexander the Great: 2000 years of treasures*.



Right Statue of Heracles feasting, Roman copy of Greek original from about 330 BCE. © The State Hermitage, St Petersburg.

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM MEMBERS SINCE 1972, SUPPORTING AUSTRALIA'S FIRST MUSEUM

SAVE THE DATE!

WEDNESDAY 5 DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM SHOP

Members receive 20% discount on all
purchases between 5.30 and 8 pm.

Exclusive – Members only.



Behind the scenes –
selecting 400 treasures
for the *Alexander the Great*
exhibition. Story page 6.
Styling by Amanda Teer.
Photo by Stuart Humphreys.

EXPLORE

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Frank Howarth's photo by Carl Bento

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These generous individuals contribute to scientific research, education and public programs, and assist in the acquisition of items that enrich the Museum's collections. We would especially like to acknowledge those who generously leave a gift to the Australian Museum in their will – a lasting way to benefit generations to come.

Find out how your support can make a difference to the important work of the Australian Museum. Contact the Development Branch on **02 9320 6216** or **development@austrmus.gov.au**. Donations to the Australian Museum and its Foundation are tax deductible.



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