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The White-bellied Sea-Eagle in the Jervis Bay region:

An Exploration of the Cultural, Ecological and Conservation Significance

St. Georges Head Lookout, Bherwerre Peninsula, Jervis Bay

By Amanda Baldwin

A thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the research degree of Master of Science in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Wollongong, 2010

The information in this thesis is entirely the result of investigations conducted by the author, unless otherwise acknowledged, and has not been submitted in part, or otherwise, for any other degree or qualification.

Amanda Baldwin, May 27th, 2010

.....

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ABSTRACT

This research project seeks to challenge the historical and contemporary exclusion of Aboriginal people by negotiating more effective and collaborative relationships between settler and Aboriginal Australians. This is achieved through a cross-cultural and collaborative design which employs two primary theories within environmental management and conservation topics; 'nature is contested' and 'nature is more than human'. The thesis explores the questions of how Aboriginal and settler knowledge systems, conceptualisations of space and cultural values are represented and how, in comparison, they form commonalities and differences. In acknowledgement of Australia's diverse ecological systems and the heterogeneity of the people who constitute a part of those systems, the thesis questions are most appropriately applied to a small scale geographic location within a focused field. Subsequently, the thesis questions are examined through the fields of human geography and environmental management, and are specifically applied to a well recognised species in the study area; the White-bellied Sea-Eagle. The geographic location for the research is the Jervis Bay region on the south coast of NSW.

The research provides insight into both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous experiences pertaining to conservation in the Jervis Bay region, with considerable overlap between the two study-groups, each informing the other. The research findings from both participant groups highlight a continued contestation of Aboriginal knowledge and management practices, due to privileged methods of measurement and comparison to 'traditional' Aboriginal contexts which rely upon continuity and very little change. Results also indicated conflict between cross-cultural conceptualisations of space, promoting disparity between the two Aboriginal Communities in the study area as well as highlighting existing gaps in the acknowledgement and understanding of Aboriginal and ecological conceptualisations. Finally, the research indicates some commonality between the two groups regarding the cultural significance of the White-bellied Sea-Eagle as well as challenging the science based human-nature dichotomy. The embodied and affective dimensions of human-nonhuman encounters, demonstrates that the Settler science model thus reveals the falsity of its own binary logic. These research findings assist in negotiating cross-cultural differences, encourage further understanding, and empower both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous knowledge systems, conceptualisations of space, and cultural values for the overall interest of improved environmental conservation and management.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIATSIS:	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ANPWS	Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service
BNP	Booderee National Park
CAMBA	China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
CITES	Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna
DECCW	Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (NSW)
DDET	Department of Defence Environment Team (Beecroft Peninsula, Jervis Bay, NSW)
DEWHA	Australian Government, Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
DIPNR	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (NSW), now divided into two separate departments, The Department of Planning and The Department of Natural Resources
DPIPWE	Department of Primary Industry, Parks, Water and Environment (TAS)
EPBC Act	*The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, Australian Government
IUCN	The World Conservation Union (formerly the International Union for the Conservation of Nature)
JBMP	Jervis Bay Marine Park (NSW)
JBNP	Jervis Bay National Park (NSW)
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	NSW Marine Parks Authority
NCAI	National Congress of American Indians

NPWS	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW), a division of DECCW
NPA	National Parks Australia
TSC Act	*Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (NSW) and *Threatened Species Conservation Amendment Act 2002* (NSW)

Terminology:

'Country'- The term 'Country' has a different meaning in Aboriginal English than its standard Western English definition. While the definition in Aboriginal English is rather complex and ambiguous, a basic understanding is that 'Country' is an 'ecological web', a 'nourishing terrain…a place that gives and receives life' (Rose, 2002: 18, 14). 'Country' is used in Aboriginal English as both a proper and common noun; as if one is speaking to a person (Rose, 2002). Deborah Rose illuminates:

> …they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, grive for country and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with consciousness, action, and a will toward life. Because of its richness in meaning, country is home and peace; nourishment for body, mind and spirit; and heart's ease (Rose, 2002:14).

Delia Lowe, from Jerrinja Aboriginal Community explains 'It [Country] is related to all places. It's like a web, which branches out where all things are related, from hunting to ceremony to religion. For a long time, thousands of years, our people have lived on this land. Our very existence is our relationship to this land, and if we cannot have that something will die within us' (Lowe, 1988). The use of the term 'Country' in this thesis, works to embody the richness of its meaning for Aboriginal people generally, and particularly for the Aboriginal people who belong to the Country I visited for this research project.

'Totemism'* and *'Dreaming'- 'Totemism' is a term used originally to define the beliefs and cultural practices of one Native North American tribe situated north of Lake Huron, the Ojibwa (Rose et al., 2003). Despite the unique origins of the terms 'totem' and 'totemism', an early generation of academics adopted these terms to define and group together 'the phenomenon' of various Indigenous cosmologies ('cosmologies' meaning- 'a people's basic assumptions about what kind of world they live in, what forces control it, and what the place of humans is'), creating what was commonly considered a universal term (Rose et al., 2003: 3). Many scholars have since critiqued the Ojibwa term's usage to define the multitude of various Indigenous cosmologies, and the acceptance and appropriateness of this term also varies among Aboriginal Australians (Rose et al., 2003). As 'some Aboriginal people in NSW use the term and seem to regard it as an important part of their culture (Nayutah & Finlay 1988), while others find it unfamiliar, and some find it offensive' (Rose et al., 2003: 2). The term 'totem', in Australia, is interchangeable with the term, 'Dreaming', which is

characteristically Aboriginal Australian (Rose et al., 2003). Rose et al. (2003) best explains the complexities of the terms 'totem' and 'totemism' in this excerpt:

> The terms 'totem' and 'totemism convey three main meanings in NSW:
>
> 1. The first is an identity meaning- the 'totem' is a non-human species or phenomenon that stands for, or represents, the group.
> 2. The second is a relationship meaning- the 'totem' and the person or group share their physical substance, and share a kin relatedness.
> 3. The third is a worldview meaning- the relationships are embedded in a view of the world in which connectivity is the foundation of all life.
>
> Several main points can be made concerning contemporary totemism in NSW:
>
> - Totemism articulates a system of kinship with the natural world.
> - Totemism is expressive of a worldview in which kinship is a major basis for all life, in which the natural world and humans are participants in life processes. Relationships are based on the kin-concepts of enduring solidarity, responsibility and care.
> - In some areas totems represent individuals and groups in broader social contexts. Group representation is often achieved emblematically- the image of the totem represents the person or group to others.
> - One major issue arising from the case studies is ecological connectivity. A totemic species is not treated as if it were isolated from its environment. To the contrary, the duty of care that inheres in bonds of mutual life-giving includes human care of the whole environment which enables the totemic species to thrive.
> - A second major issue arising from the case studies is respect. Respect is founded in law and works across human and 'natural' systems. Respect for knowledge and autonomy is linked with respect for living things and their habitats.
>
> (Rose et al., 2003: 3)

The terms 'Dreaming', 'totem' and 'totemism' are used throughout the thesis, with particular considerations for the various complexities in the terms meanings.

'Indigenous'- The term 'Indigenous' is a universal term used to describe the original inhabitants of particular territories (Kottak, 2007). The United Nations have played a significant role in establishing international best practice regarding the acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples' rights and interests. The United Nations, with significant input from the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Jose R. Martinez Cobo, provided a working definition for the term 'Indigenous peoples' which states:

> Indigenous Communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system. This historical continuity may consist of the continuation, for an extended period reaching into the present of one or more of the following factors:
>
> a) Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;
> b) Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands;
> c) Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc.);
> d) Language (whether used as the only language, as mother-tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);
> e) Residence on certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;
> f) Other relevant factors.
>
> On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group). This preserves for these communities the sovereign right and power to decide who belongs to them, without external interference (United Nations, 2004: 4).

These definitions explain the key commonality between the multitude of diverse and unique Indigenous cultures throughout the world. However, many Indigenous cultures also share similar characteristics with cultural aspects such as, knowledge, resource use, etc. which will be explored in the thesis (Eriksen & Adams, 2010). In an international context this term can incorporate all Indigenous peoples such as, Native Americans, Maori, Saami, San, First nation peoples, native people, etc. In an Australian context, this term is used to describe both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Gregory *et. al*, 2009). While this thesis does recognise more specific terminology could be used to differentiate between cultures, these terms are not within the scope of the thesis. As a result, the thesis refers to the universal term 'Indigenous', with the exception of the term used to define Indigenous people originating from Australia.

'*Aboriginal'*- the term 'Aboriginal' is used in this thesis to specifically describe the Indigenous people originally from Australia. This term is not inclusive of Torres Strait

Islander people and other Indigenous peoples. Although not used in this thesis, more locally or regionally appropriate classifications used by Australian Indigenous peoples, such as 'Goori', 'Koori', "Murri', 'Noongar', etc., are acknowledged (Head, 2000a; Head, 2000b; Cavanagh, 2007; Gregory *et. al*, 2009).

***'Non-Indigenous' and 'Settler'* –** the terms used throughout the thesis to describe people who are of Western or Colonial lineage. Non-Indigenous and Settler Australians have either ancestors who settled in Australia in the last 300 years or have recently settled in Australia themselves. Settler Australians are not of 'Indigenous' or 'Aboriginal' background.

***'Indigenous Knowledge' and 'Indigenous Environmental Knowledge'*-** Several terminologies have been created and applied to describe 'the environmental knowledge and cultural resource practices of Indigenous peoples' (Eriksen & Adams, 2010). These terms include 'Indigenous Knowledge', 'Indigenous Environmental Knowledge', 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge' (and its acronym 'TEK'), 'Indigenous Technical Knowledge' and 'Ethno-ecology' (Berkes, 2008; Menzies, 2006; Menzies & Butler, 2006; Eriksen & Adams, in press). While recognizing all of these terms, this thesis employs what I believe to be the most appropriate and universal term, 'Indigenous Environmental Knowledge'. This term does not emphasize a static knowledge as does the term 'traditional'; it does not accentuate a mechanical knowledge process as does the term 'technical'; and it does not seemingly restrict the definition to an ecologically based knowledge, as does the terms 'Ethno-ecology' and 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge'. 'Indigenous knowledge' incorporates all ways of knowing for Indigenous people, and 'Indigenous Environmental Knowledge' slightly narrows 'Indigenous Knowledge' to focus on both traditional and contemporary environmental themes.

***'Local Knowledge' and 'Local Environmental Knowledge'*-** A term used to define a broader dimension of knowing which is at times considered more inclusive than 'Indigenous Environmental Knowledge'. 'Local Knowledge' is typically excluded from the Western paradigm of 'formal' education and knowledge though it is not specifically identified with Indigenous or Aboriginal ways of knowing (Griffith, 2006; McGoodwin, 2006).

***'Traditional Owner'*-** 'Traditional Owner' is defined as a person who, 'through membership of a descent group or clan, has responsibility for caring for particular country... [who is] authorised to speak for country and its heritage' (Australian Heritage Commission, 2002).