

1-1-2010

Restored Nature, Familiar Culture: Contesting Visions for Preferred Environments in Australian Cities

D. Trigger

Lesley M. Head
University of Wollongong, lhead@uow.edu.au

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Recommended Citation

Trigger, D. and Head, Lesley M.: Restored Nature, Familiar Culture: Contesting Visions for Preferred Environments in Australian Cities 2010, 231-250.
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/scipapers/809>

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Abstract

How are preferences for “native” and “introduced” species of plants and animals given expression in Australian cities? Given the nation's predominantly European cultural heritage, how do urban Australians articulate multiple desires for living environments encountered in everyday life? In examining the cases of inner city parks, backyards, and more general views about flora and fauna appropriate for the city, the paper considers a range of deeply enculturated attachments to familiar landscapes. While residents have considerable interest in the possibilities of urban ecological restoration, our interviews, ethnographic observation, and textual analysis also reveal cultural preferences for introduced species and emplaced attachments to historically modified landscapes. These preferences and attachments are linked to senses of identity developed during formative life experiences. In the relatively young post-settler society of Australia, such drivers of environmental desires can sit uneasily alongside science-driven propositions about what is good for biodiversity and ecological sustainability.

Keywords

culture, visions, familiar, preferred, nature, environments, contesting, australian, restored, cities

Disciplines

Life Sciences | Physical Sciences and Mathematics | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

Trigger, D. & Head, L. M. (2010). Restored Nature, Familiar Culture: Contesting Visions for Preferred Environments in Australian Cities. *Nature and Culture*, 5 (3), 231-250.

