

From Reverence to Rampage

Catherine Laudine

This paper investigates the question of why two human populations have taken such determined and different paths in regard to nature and environment in Australia.

Firstly, the path of the original Australians is reviewed. Looking at some details of the ways their nature knowledge was held onto and practiced will allow some insight into how Aboriginal Australians made a system that was not only deeply embedded in culture but also provided a means of managing a sustainable way of life in one of the most challenging and fragile places on earth.

This first picture will be contrasted with a brief review of the very different path being taken by government and big business in regard to nature and environment in Australia now. This approach will allow the development of an argument that these current practices, which are often damaging and unsustainable, are also embedded in cultural ways. Though these cultural underpinnings may not be well acknowledged they must be addressed to allow for sustainable living in Australia.

Bio

Dr Catherine Laudine is an honorary associate in the Department of Anthropology, Macquarie University, in Sydney. She first worked with Aboriginal Australians in the late seventies when she was involved in research for the fledgling Aboriginal Legal Service in Redfern gathering data for land claims. This experience, together with further employment with Aboriginal Australians, resulted in a deep appreciation of their traditional lore. Her book *Aboriginal Environmental Knowledge: Rational Reverence* was published by Ashgate in 2009. She has also published work on the way that other human groups have constructed cultural tools for holding onto valued nature lore. Her interest in the ways that human groups may or may not hold onto nature lore is ongoing.