



Quarterly Essay 48 After the Future: Australia's New Extinction Crisis

Tim Flannery

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Australia is home to many animals and plants found nowhere else on earth, making Australians caretakers of a unique heritage in a land that tolerates few mistakes. Yet, in *After the Future*, Tim Flannery shows that this country is now on the brink of a new wave of extinctions, which threatens to leave our national parks as “marsupial ghost towns.” Why are species becoming extinct despite the tens of millions of dollars being spent to protect nature? And what more should be done?

In this passionate and illuminating essay, Flannery tells the story of the human impact on the continent. He revisits his Future Eaters hypothesis, discussing how firestick farming helped to shape the ecology and preserve native fauna. He looks at the way recent governments, in tandem with an indifferent populace and a rabid libertarian right, have let environmental knowledge and commitments erode.

Finally, he describes new approaches to wildlife conservation and argues that Australia must take the lead on these. This is an essay that rings the alarm on behalf of the natural world, and asks us to think again about protection of its irreplaceable riches.

‘Such is the depth of public ignorance about Australia’s extinction crisis that most people are unaware that it is occurring, while those who do know of it commonly believe that our national parks and reserves are safe places for threatened species. In fact the second extinction wave is now in full swing, and it’s emptying our national parks and wildlife reserves as ruthlessly as other landscapes.’ —Tim Flannery, *After the Future*

‘Flannery is known as a passionate advocate for conservation, but rarely has he sounded so angry.’ —Fiona Capp, *Sydney Morning Herald*

‘He’s a scientist of world standing, a prolific and bestselling writer, a noted explorer, passionate about the Australian environment, and believes global warming is a calamitous crisis facing us all. Tim Flannery is also a controversial, outspoken stirrer who promises ... to tread on toes if he has to, to get his blunt views across.’ —Kerry O’Brien, *7:30 Report*

Tim Flannery is the author of more than a dozen books, including *The Future Eaters*, *Throwim Way Leg*, *The Weather Makers*, *Now or Never* and *Here on Earth*. In 2007, he was the Australian of the Year. He is currently Chief Commissioner of Australia’s Climate Commission.

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