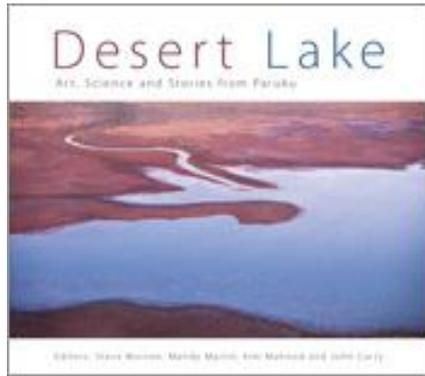


Kimberley Society



Book Note

Desert Lake: Art, Science and Stories from Paruku edited by Steve Morton, Mandy Martin, Kim Mahood, and John Carty. [CSIRO Publishing](#), Collingwood (Vic.), 2013. Hardback, 312 pages, illustrated, ISBN 9780643106284, RRP \$59.95.

This stunning book, with input from fifty contributors, contains text, colour paintings, colour photographs, and maps. It presents Paruku (Lake Gregory) in a way that will never be rivalled.

The contributors, each of whom has a portrait and a brief biographical note at the front of the book, include but are not limited to an anthropologist, art workers, artists, councillors, community members, conservationists, cultural resource managers, directors, ecologists, a film-maker, a geographer, livestock breeders and managers, photographers, rangers, scientists, Traditional Owners, and writers. Some wear more than one such label, and there are also other people who, without being identified as contributors, are acknowledged for the inclusion of their art, stories or photographs. The Indigenous contributors are almost all Walmajarri people who live on their Country in either the Mulan community or the Billiluna community.

By combining artistic, scientific, and Indigenous views, *Desert Lake* provides a smorgasbord of colour, culture, information, and insight. It embraces water, land, and people, moving from the *Waljirri* (Dreaming) to the present and then looking forward. In their introduction, the editors write: 'Above all it tells the stories of many people, Walmajarri and *kartiya* [whitefella], who love a remarkable Lake, and want to share their understanding of it with others.'

The telling is gentle at first, with even the introduction set amid paintings and stories. The book is divided into three parts: 'Deep Time'; 'Recent Times'; and 'The Future'. Each part has Indigenous and non-Indigenous contributors, and each explores cross-cultural issues related to understanding and interpretation. Those aspects are very much about the sharing of knowledge and the opportunity to learn from one another. To some extent, they are demonstrated by the placement of *Parnkupurti layers*, 2011, a painting by Hanson Pye (page 26) and *Parnkupurti layers*, 2012, a screenprint by John Carty and Hanson Pye (page 28). Hanson Pye is a Traditional Owner. John Carty is an anthropologist.

In 'Part 1: Deep Time', Jim Bowler discusses work that began in 1978 and, among other things, showed that a stream cobble excavated from Parnkupurti Creek in 2008 had been worked by hand almost 50,000 years ago. That dating established a new benchmark in the human occupation of northern Australia. 'Part 2: Recent Times' is the largest part. It takes in exploration, the establishment of the pastoral industry during and after the late nineteenth century, associated conflict, the Mulan and Billiluna communities, and, to a lesser degree, the missions. It then focuses on natural history, art, mapping, and the Paruku Indigenous Protected Area. In 'Part 3: The Future', the discussion revolves around opportunities and challenges that affect the viability of Mulan and the prospects of the people who live and work there.

Desert Lake, which was launched on 1 March 2013 at Araluen Culture Centre in Alice Springs, can be purchased at selected bookshops, direct from [CSIRO Publishing](#), or as an eBook from [eBooks.com](#) and other retailers.

Cathie Clement