



Zoology on the table: the science, sustainability and politics of eating animals

RZS NSW Annual Forum– 7 November 2015

Australian Museum – William Street, Sydney (enter via top William St entrance)

Terms such as *carnivore* and *predation* are well established in zoology and ecology as they relate to animals eating other animals. The study of predator-prey interactions has a long and deep-rooted lineage within zoology and forms some of the core principles within many ecological studies. When humans are the predator, however, the language used can change and many important and controversial social and political questions are brought to the fore.

The practice of eating animals – from cows, fish and chickens to crocodiles and insects – is unavoidably bound up with issues of science, sustainability and politics. The production of the meats with which many of us are most familiar, beef, pork, chicken and lamb, is in many parts of the world shifting from farms and butchers shops, to factories and supermarkets. At the same time, fishing practices, from the recreational to factory ships and aquaculture, present us with a range of continuing and emerging challenges. Considering the vast biodiversity of invertebrates, it is surprising that only a few groups are commonly farmed or eaten in the ‘west’: crustaceans (prawns) and molluscs (mussels, scallops, abalone and oysters) foremost among them. Of course, many other cultures have long established practices of, for example, eating insects – and a growing number of environmental groups, like “Little Herds” in the USA, are calling for the expansion of this practice. One could also go through the supermarket and list all the animal food products, such as honey, eggs, milk, and cheese.

The consumption of each of these animal foods raises a range of questions in the broad areas of ecology, ethics, food security, sustainability, legal constraints and options, and more. The food systems that we eat within are intimately connected to processes of habitat loss and the management of remnant native vegetation, as well as the consumption of incredible quantities of fossil fuels in the production, packaging and transportation of food. Today, hunting and fishing are often similarly complex, raising intractable issues around social justice and access to land, as well as the ethics and efficacy of various approaches to ‘pest’ and threatened species management. Nothing is simple when animals are on the table.

Political concerns cover many areas of zoology, but this forum will hold its focus on the politics of eating animals. Zoologists can contribute to this critical debate about what we eat. There is also often a divide between some humanities scholars and those in the sciences on this issue and, in part, this forum aims to exchange points of view to explore the intellectual backgrounds that lie behind some of the positions and to look for common ground.

We do expect a day of strongly held views, and that debates will be robust, not personal, and that ideas will be centre stage. Audience participation is central to the way RZS forums are conducted, and the voices from the floor are recorded and become part of the publication to follow, which will be in *Australian Zoologist*. Do come to the forum and join the discussion.

Register at: rzsnsw.org.au

For information about the day please contact:

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Draft program: 18 October 2015 (subject to change)

Session 1	Welcome and Introduction <i>Martin Predavec</i> – President RZS NSW
	Carnivores make the world green <i>Chris Dickman</i> – University of Sydney
	Australia's coastal fisheries and farmed seafood: an ecological basis for determining 'sustainability' <i>David Booth</i> – University of Technology, Sydney
	Struggles over kangaroos as a green and lean food source, and the alienation of landholders and consumers alike <i>Michelle Young</i> - Australian National University, Canberra
	Do humans forage optimally and what does this mean for zoology on the table? <i>Graham Pyke</i> – University of Technology, Sydney
	Plenary 1
Morning tea	
Session 2	Cows in the Anthropocene: Four propositions <i>Andrew McGregor</i> and <i>Donna Houston</i> , Department of Geography and Planning, Macquarie University
	Eating dingoes <i>Fiona Probyn-Rapsey</i> - Human Animal Research Network, University of Sydney
	A chicken in every pot <i>K-lynn Smith</i> – Macquarie University
	A polarising issue: Inuit use of polar bears for trophy hunting and for food <i>Rosie Cooney</i> – University of New South Wales
	Plenary 2
Lunch	
Session 3	Archaeology on the side: Sydney's Aboriginal people as predators prior to 1788 <i>Oliver Brown</i> - Associates Archaeology & Heritage
	The cultures of fishing in NSW <i>Heather Goodall</i> - University of Technology Sydney
	Pests on the table: Peskiness in social and historical context <i>Emily O'Gorman</i> , Department of Geography and Planning, Macquarie University, and <i>Thom van Dooren</i> , Environmental Humanities, University of New South Wales
	To Cull or to Slaughter? Might eating feral animals make a practical or ethical difference? <i>Libby Robin</i> – Australian National University, Canberra
	Plenary 3
Afternoon tea	
Session 4	The multiple faces of sustainability - from sustained yield harvest to triple bottom line <i>Sue Briggs</i> – Canberra University
	What's food and nutrition security got to do with wildlife conservation? <i>Robyn Alders</i> – University of Sydney
	Semivegetarianism: good for animals, good for humans, good for the environment <i>Ian Wallis</i> – Australian National University, Canberra
	TBC <i>Gordon Grigg</i> – University of Queensland
	Plenary 4
Poster: Insect farming and consumption in Australia - opportunities and barriers - <i>Julia Bartrim</i>	