

Review

Rainforest riches we share with New Guinea

This is a gem of a book because it tells – in plain English and through fascinating photography – the little known story of the rainforests of Cape York Peninsula, living reminders of our continent’s biogeographical connection with New Guinea.

Author and scientist Robert Heinsohn gives the reader a first-hand introduction to the very different plants and animals of these northern rainforests. Associate Professor Heinsohn is a conservation biologist who, for the past 10 years, has been studying the behaviour and ecology of large parrots and snakes on Cape York Peninsula.

Among the book’s ‘protagonists’ are the *Eclectus* parrot and the palm cockatoo, both already made famous through the beautifully filmed ABC TV documentary *Australia: Land of Parrots*, screened earlier this year.

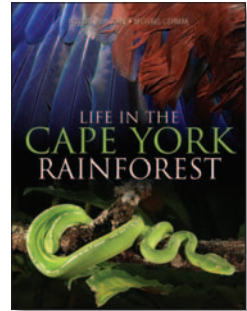
Those who saw the documentary will recall that *Eclectus* parrots are quite unique in the bird world because the bright red

and blue female far outshines her duller green plumed mate.

The punk-looking palm cockatoos have a different claim to fame – the males carefully select and shape sticks that they drum on hollow tree trunks to attract mates.

For Australians who think our wildlife only comes in shades of beige or brown, *Life in the Cape York Rainforest* is an eye-opener. The colours of birds such as the superb fruit-dove, the buff-breasted paradise kingfisher and the red-bellied pitta jump off the page. Then there are the myriad butterflies, frogs, lizards, skinks and snakes, including the brilliant green python.

The book has a poignant epilogue



Life in the Cape York Rainforest

Robert Heinsohn and Michael Cermak

CSIRO Publishing

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<http://www.publish.csiro.au/pid/5972.htm>

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You can enter the draw to win a free copy of *Life in the Cape York Rainforest* by simply emailing ecos@csiro.au. Entries close Friday 30 January 2009.

about the Smuggler’s Tree, an old fig tree that, until recently, had towered above the canopy of the Iron Range rainforest, providing nesting hollows for *Eclectus* parrots and a refuge for other birds and animals. The tree died from cyclone damage, not only leaving a hole in the canopy but a reminder of the fragility of these ‘islands’ of biodiversity.



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