

In 1857, Edward Wilson, owner of the Melbourne Argus, suggested that 'the introduction of British songbirds, such as skylarks and nightingales, to Victoria would temper the harsh laugh of kookaburras and the raucous shrieks of cockatoos'.

Wilson was a member of the curiously-named Victorian Acclimatisation Society,

How the animals all marched in

one of several established in Australia during the 1850s and 1860s with assistance from colonial governments. The role of these societies is explored in *The Australian Ark*, a book about the history of domesticated animals in Australia written by former assistant chief of the Australian Health Laboratory, Dr Ian Parsonson.

The book begins with the seven horses, eight cattle, 44 sheep, four goats and 28 swine, bought in Capetown along with plants, cuttings and seeds, to be brought to Australia with the first fleet. It covers the introduction of the horse, Australia's first live animal export, and the foundations of Australia's wool and beef industries, including the role of early leaders such as Phillip, King, Macarthur and Bligh. Development of the veterinary profession and the control of major sheep and cattle diseases are outlined.

Camels were first imported in 1840, llamas and alpacas in 1853, and angora-cashmere goats as early as 1823. There were less practical introductions too.

The 'acclimatisers', soon bored with the sublime, imported exotic birds, monkeys, starlings, skylarks, thrushes, Indian mynahs, greenfinches, sparrows and robins, ostriches, pheasants, partridges, ducks, geese and white swans. By the 1870s, opposition to 'acclimatisation activities' began to mount. It was becoming obvious that rabbits and sparrows were serious pests.

But the follies of the early settlers were far outweighed by their achievements, and of course their task was never easy. Even now, as Parsonson notes in his final chapter, Australians are still learning to cope with the country's environmental requirements.

'Present generations owe a great debt of gratitude to the first settlers who began farming with animals and plants obtained from several continents,' he writes. *The Australian Ark* is a fitting tribute to their deeds.

The Australian Ark is published in hardback, is indexed and contains a comprehensive list of references. It is available for \$59.95 plus \$8 postage from CSIRO Publishing, free call 1800 626 420, email: sales@publish.csiro.au.

Looking down on the continent

Imagine having access to a satellite view of your neighbourhood, property or special place of interest. You could trace local patterns of land use or vegetation growth, or perhaps chart your progress on a long trek through rugged terrain.

Well here's your opportunity. A new service developed by the Australian Surveying and Land Information Group (AUSLIG) and CSIRO Mathematical and Information Sciences has made available on the World Wide Web a detailed mosaic of satellite images covering all of continental Australia.

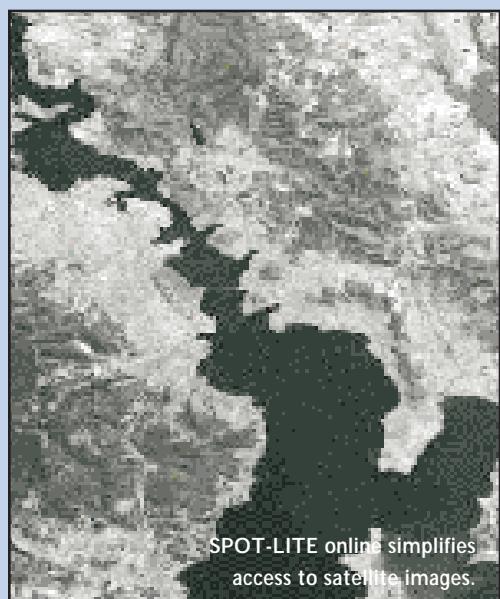
The service, called GEODATA SPOT-LITE online, has a catalogue of images from the French 'SPOT' satellite series which have been processed at AUSLIG's Canberra remote sensing facility, the Australian Centre for Remote Sensing (ACRES). Users can locate images of interest by clicking on the map interfaces provided, progressively zeroing in on their required areas. Selected images can then be bought and quickly downloaded.

Each black and white image is between six months and five years old, covers 25 square kilometres, and has a resolution of 10 metres. That means the smallest object that can be seen is about 10 m by 10 m. You won't be able to spot sunbathers or check out the neighbour's vegies!

SPOT-LITE images are supplied in industry standard GeoTIFF format and can be displayed easily in any graphics package that can read TIFF. In addition, many geographic information and image analysis systems can read the georeferencing details stored in the GeoTIFF header.

Potential uses for SPOT-LITE online are limited only by the imagination.

The images help to update existing geographic databases with information such as the position of roads, railways, towns, vegetation and powerlines. They could also be used by farmers to create whole-farm plans, by schools for geography and environmental studies, by regional and



national planning authorities, or by emergency service organisations.

Contact: Mike Clarke CSIRO Mathematical and Information Sciences (02) 6216 7006, fax (02) 6216 7007, email: mike.clarke@cmis.csiro.au. Each SPOT-LITE image costs \$300. They can be found at <http://www.auslig.gov.au/spotlite>.