

## PREFACE

Little was known about the ecology of cockatoos in Australia before the 1960s, when a series of landmark studies on a number of species in the Western Australian wheatbelt significantly advanced our understanding. There have since been a number of other studies, generally of the more common species, many of which are considered pests. Recently, detailed studies have commenced or been completed on a number of rare and threatened mainland cockatoo species or subspecies. Cockatoos occupying the islands to the north of Australia have received less scientific attention, as the difficult field conditions and political unrest there discourage long-term research projects. A small number of habitat preference studies have been completed, and local programs aimed at conserving island cockatoos are underway in a number of countries.

The recent studies of threatened cockatoos reflect a change in attitudes. For much of the last century cockatoos were generally viewed as a common part of the landscape, often existing in plague proportions. Their capacity for speech, beautiful plumage and entertaining behaviour made them a popular cage bird. For some communities, the cockatoo trade was a source of income. Today, we are likely to view cockatoos as a uniquely south-east Asian group of birds, many of which are struggling in an environment that has been heavily modified by humans. Ecologists are endeavouring to learn more about this difficult-to-study group of birds in order to provide a sound basis for the management and recovery of species. Government and non-government organisations are working hard to ensure species have a future in the wild. Aviculturists see their role in ensuring the long-term persistence of species as running appropriate and well-managed captive breeding programs.

This book offers insights into the ecology and conservation of cockatoos. I have adopted a thematic approach to give readers a broader understanding of the factors governing the distribution and abundance of cockatoos, and ultimately their long-term survival. Greater understanding will, I hope, lead to action to protect cockatoos and their habitats. I will be happy if this book inspires others to undertake research on cockatoos. Despite the large number of scientific papers on Australian species, we still have much to learn. The Galah, the most widespread of all cockatoos, is unstudied throughout most of its range. Virtually nothing is known of