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WILD DOG DREAMING

Animal Extinction: the Anomaly of Human-Driven Disaster

The endangered dingo of Australia is not the first animal to face extinction, but its story is particularly disturbing as it is the first to be caused by a single species: our own. In **WILD DOG DREAMING: Love and Extinction (April 2011; UVA Press)**, Deborah Bird Rose draws on her extensive conversations with Aboriginal people to offer an in-depth analysis of what constitutes an ethical relationship in this era of loss.

For the Aboriginal people, with whom the author lived for many years, questions of extinction are historically very sensitive. Not only have the populations of their dogs been viciously murdered, so have their human communities. Offering a philosophical and religious examination of how humans allow this to happen, Bird Rose says that the mistake of many calls to action is the use of fear as a motivating force. Rather, she argues, we need to start thinking along the lines of the great conservation biologist Michael Soule, in that people are only willing to “save what they love.” Asking what’s arguably one of the most important questions of our time—are humans capable of loving, and therefore of caring for, the animals and planets that are currently losing their lives in a growing cascade of extinctions—Bird Rose offers a compelling challenge to the way we think about the environment around us.

Going so far as to juxtapose the extinction of the dingo with the Nazi genocide, Bird Rose examines the ways that the boundary of difference is policed so that it becomes possible for us to ignore animal deaths.

The brazenness with which the dingo is being wiped out sheds valuable, and chilling, light on the likely fate of countless other animal and plant species. **WILD DOG DREAMING** offers a powerful example of the ways in which we must take time to reflect on our environment and how we can live in it harmoniously.

Deborah Bird Rose, Professor in the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion at Macquarie University, Sydney, is the author of *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* and *Dingo Makes Us Human: Life and Land in an Australian Aboriginal Culture*.