

birdlife and Lethologica Press

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Birdlife is a new book published by Lethologica Press. Combining contemporary visual art with different forms of writing, the motivation behind the book was to explore the possibilities of collaboration between text and art.

With the open-ended theme of the avian world, the contributors – a visual artist, three poets and a prose writer – provided various interpretations of the feathered theme.

Perdita Phillips' photographs, doodles and sketches range from covert photography from within museums around the world, to tracking bowerbirds in the Kimberley. Poets Michael Farrell, Graeme Miles and Nandi Chinna, and prose writer Nyanda Smith, cover subjects ranging from politics, to fatherhood, to having a haircut.

While the editors Perdita Phillips and Nyanda Smith came up with the idea of the book in 2008, it took three years from concept stage to finished book. Perdita designed the book, and a consultative editor, Christine Nagel, was employed.


Artwork and text are interspersed and given equal weighting in the book. 'We wanted the book to dynamically explore art and text working together,' explains Perdita. 'We didn't want the artwork to purely interpret the text, or vice versa, but for them to equally affect the readings of each other.'

birdlife has been published in small format in a small print run of 350 limited edition copies, funded by a Department of Culture and the Arts Development grant, and printed by Lamb Print. 'We hope that the book works as a beautifully produced object, that people can dip into and draw something different from, each time,' says Nyanda.

Established by Perdita in 2005, Lethologica Press is small Fremantle-based independent press. Having published a range of visual art publications with a critical writing component, *birdlife* marks a new foray into publishing interdisciplinary books. 'We want to encourage critical dialogue about art in Western Australia

and take advantage of the interdisciplinary energies between art and text,' says Perdita.

The Press' upcoming project is the 'Art/Text Clearinghouse Project' – which will showcase new digitally printed books of art and text collaborations at an exhibition at the Perth Centre for Photography in February 2012. The project has encouraged artists and writers to meet, collaborate and publish using new digital technologies, with the aim of advancing publishing and critical writing about art in WA. The exhibition will also feature previously published art and text books.

For copies of *birdlife* or more information on participating in the Art/text/Clearinghouse Project go to www.lethologiapress.org 

 *birdlife* cover image showing, Perdita Phillips, *birdlife*, 2006