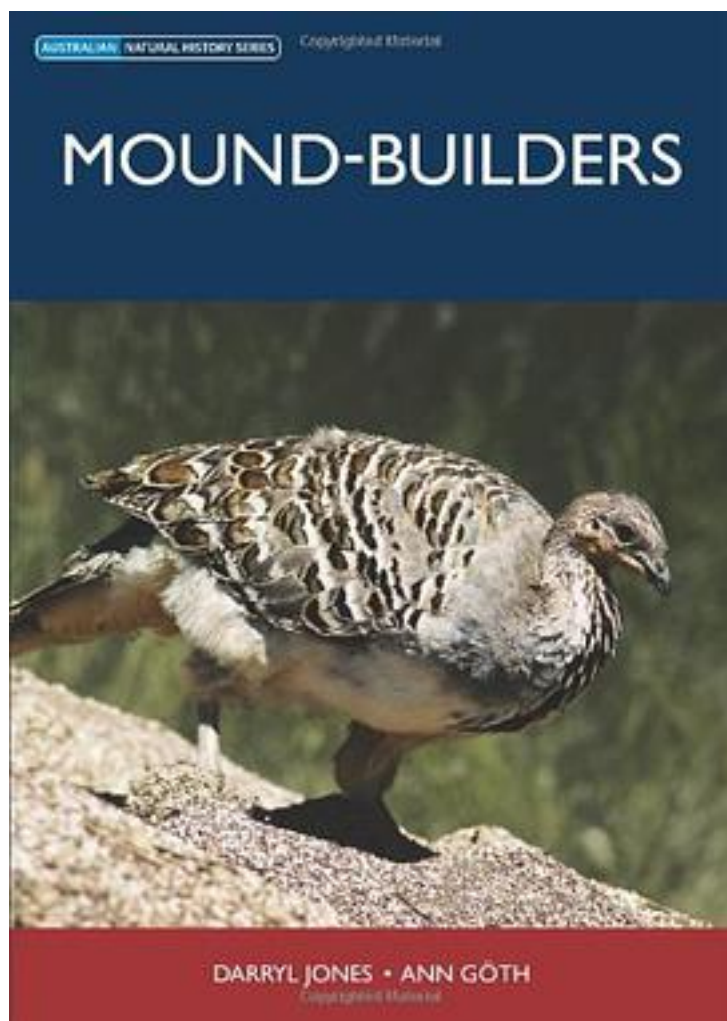


Mound-builders



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The Megapodes are an ancient and remarkable group of birds that occur only in

Australia, Papua New Guinea and the islands that surround them. Within this group, there are 22 species of mound-builders, three of which occur in Australia in dramatically differing habitats: the Scrubfowl lives in the humid tropics; the Brush-Turkey in dense forested areas from Cape York to Sydney; and most remarkable of all, the Malleefowl, which lives in the arid interior. Mound-builders are unique in being the only birds that do not incubate their eggs using body heat; rather, a variety of naturally occurring sources of heat is exploited such as solar energy, geothermal and, most commonly, the heat generated by decomposing organic matter. This book shows how this remarkable adaptation influences every part of these birds' lives, including the development of the embryo, the parentless life of the hatchlings, their social organization and their survival. Scientific interest in these birds has increased significantly in recent decades, and "Mound-Builders" summarizes many significant discoveries. Much of this research has been focussed on the three Australian species, which provide greatly contrasting approaches to surviving in different parts of the continent.

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