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2015 – Grasslands of the World (Jim Hoy, Larry Patton, Marty White, Editors)

Australia (Northern Territory)

The Nature Conservancy

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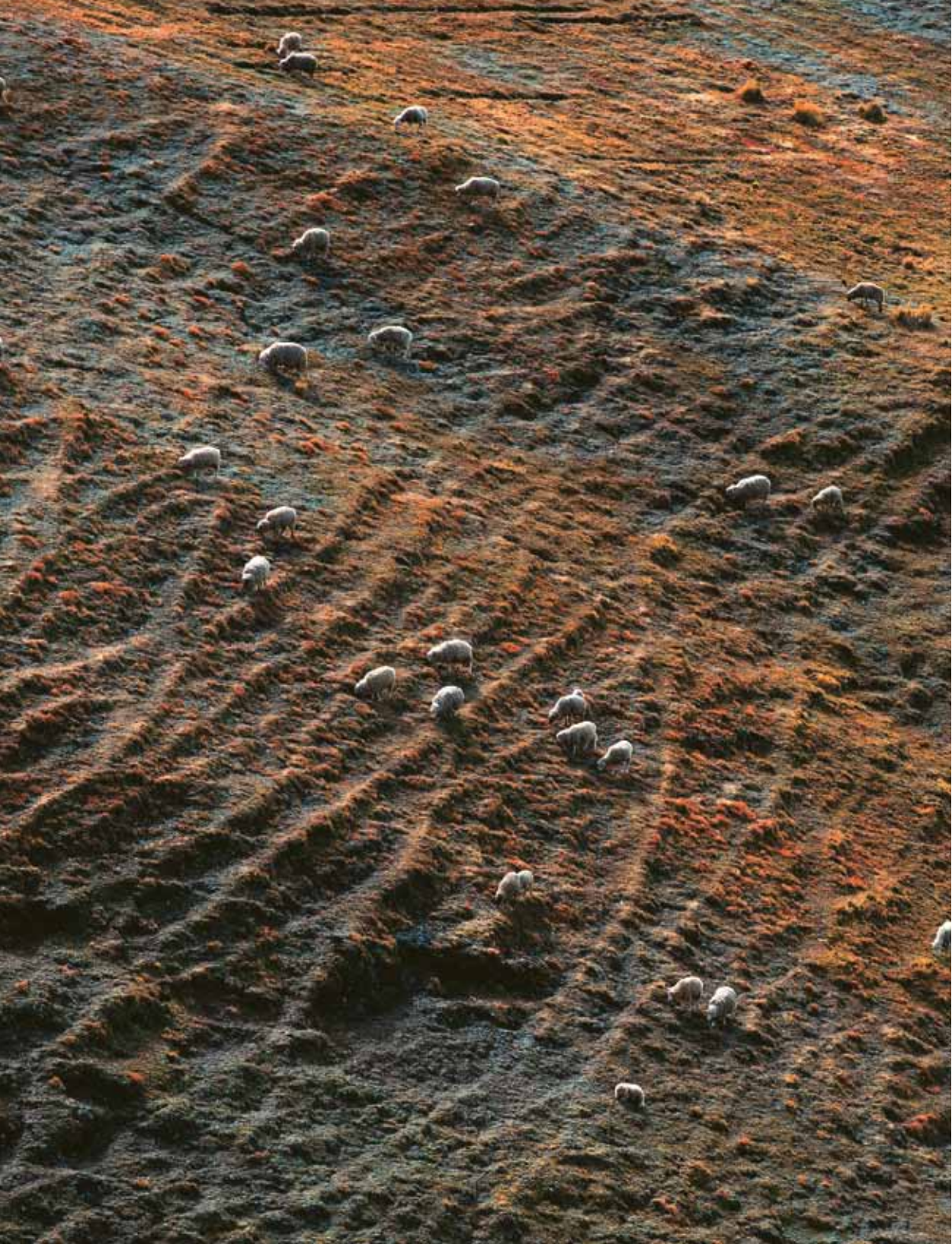
Recommended Citation

The Nature Conservancy (2015). "Australia (Northern Territory)," *Symphony in the Flint Hills Field Journal*. <https://newprairiepress.org/sfh/2015/australia/1>

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The Field Journals are made possible in part with funding from the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation.

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AUSTRALIA NORTHERN TERRITORY

Covering more than 247 million acres, an area larger than California, Colorado, and New Mexico combined, Northern Australia is one of the few remaining large-scale natural areas left on Earth. Tropical savanna once covered about 12 percent of the planet, but more than 70 percent has been lost. While Northern Australia has rainforests, scrublands, and mangroves, most of the region is blanketed by tropical and sub-tropical savanna, vast plains of tall, dense grass with pockets of woodlands. The grassland region harbors 460 bird species, 110 mammal species, 225 freshwater fish species, and 40 percent of Australia's reptiles.

The rich animal and plant life was critical to the livelihoods of Aboriginal people who have lived sustainably in balance with the landscape for over 40,000 years. Over millennia, the indigenous populations shaped the landscape with their cultural practices and active management of the land.

Tribal groups used controlled fires to flush out game, to rejuvenate aging vegetation, and to keep tree and shrub species from taking over grasslands. Today conservationists are working to restore traditional practices, such as prescribed burning, which will improve the health of Northern Australia's grasslands.

Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy

OPPOSITE PAGE: SHEEP COUNTRY (DETAIL)
Jim Richardson