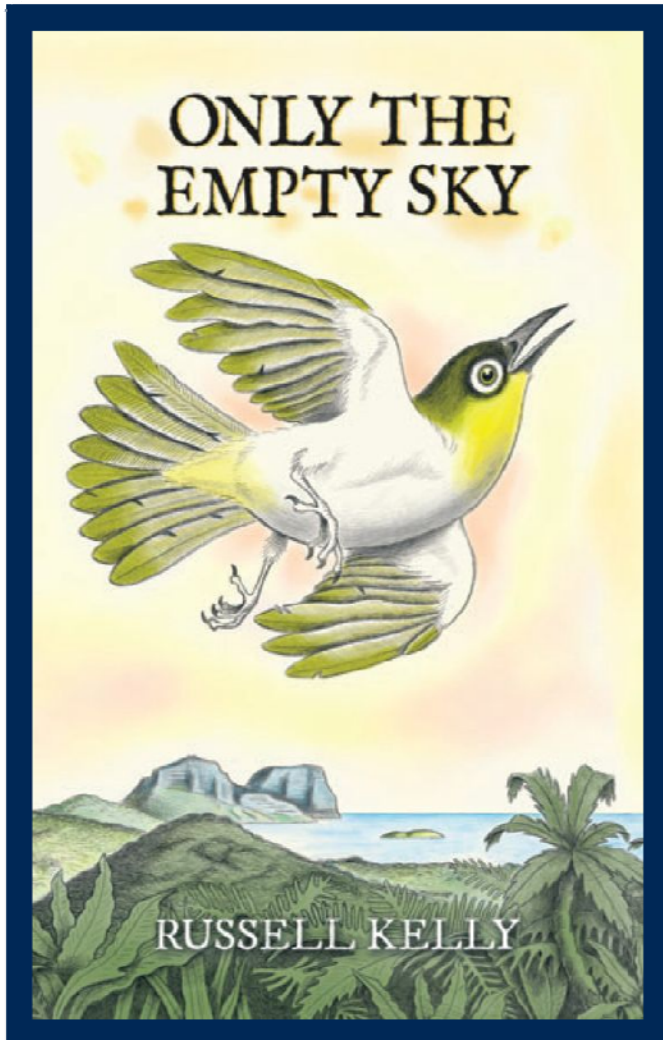


## Extinction finds a unique voice

Australia's precious and vanishing birds star in *Only the Empty Sky* – a new novel about love, brutality and finding home set against the backdrop of one of Australia's most beautiful and mysterious islands.

Russell Kelly's first novel is set in 1918 and follows the journey of American watercolourist and naturalist Paul De Martinet who visits Lord Howe Island off the New South Wales coast to paint the island's vanishing birds.

There he meets gifted local gardener and amateur botanist Margaret Sleaf and together they explore the island's mysterious kentia palm forests.



But suspicion and jealousy lurk just below the surface of an otherwise carefree community and soon they are the victims of a savage attack that sets in motion their own choices of survival.

Russell Kelly is a Tasmanian writer who has meticulously researched his subject matter – completing many trips to Lord Howe Island and experiencing its wonderful natural environment at first hand.

*Only the Empty Sky* is simultaneously a testament to the yearning terrain of the human heart and a sobering portrait of our environment in crisis.

It explores the vital human emotions behind our relationship to the Earth and the creatures with which we share it.

### Russell Kelly

Born 1966 in Hobart, Russell is a former editor of *Island Magazine*. His short stories have been published in *Imago*, *Island*, *Voices* and *Australian Short Stories*. His essay 'Inheriting Old Pedder' was published in *Columbus' Blindness and Other Essays*, *UQP*.

For many years he has worked as a communications professional and adviser, including to former leaders of the Australian Greens, Dr Bob Brown and Christine Milne.

The first chapter of the novel was first published in *Best Australian Stories*, and completed with the financial assistance from Arts Tasmania and the Australia Council. Published by Balboa Press and available through selected bookstores and online at [Barnes and Noble](#), [Amazon](#) or [Balboa Press](#) [www.balboapress.com.au](http://www.balboapress.com.au)

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