STUDIES IN ENVIRONMENT AND HISTORY

“This thoroughly researched book is unique and ambitious in its temporal scope and interpretation. The little-known story of guano – the fertilizer based on seabirds’ excrement that has marked much of Peruvian history – and the fascinating seabirds that produced it acquire new meanings, new actors, and a global dimension, illuminating the intersection of nature, politics, and science from a contemporary perspective.”

– Marcos Cueto, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos

“Cushman’s Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World tells the fascinating story of guano and the making of the modern world in a narrative that weaves together the geography and biology of the Pacific; political, economic, and agricultural history; and ecology, moving skillfully from the international politics of development and the technocratic ideal to the people who helped change our ideas and our understanding. A model of environmental history, it makes connections on every level and offers unexpected insights that will enrich any reader’s understanding.”

– Thomas R. Dunlap, Texas A&M University

“Cushman demonstrates that guano, through its multitude of interconnections with nitrogen, phosphate, explosives, agriculture, and politics, provides an unexpected prism through which to view and understand human history, especially in the last two hundred years.”

– Don Garden, The University of Melbourne

“Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World is a bold and original contribution to global environmental history. Cushman shows compellingly how an unlikely commodity – guano – helped create the modern Pacific world and usher in the Anthropocene. This is global history from the ground up, moving from the lives of specific individuals up to the sweeping panorama of global environmental change and the Pacific world. Cushman shows the vital role of this ‘Peripheral’ world of these Pacific guano islands in shaping global landscapes, global economies, and even global ecological thought. The story of guano in the modern era is, as Cushman capably shows, ultimately the story of how modern societies have pursued the elusive goals of ecological and economic sustainability.”

– Stuart McCook, University of Guelph, Canada