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Symphony in the Flint Hills Field Journal

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

How Man Seized Fire

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Recommended Citation

(2015). "How Man Seized Fire," *Symphony in the Flint Hills Field Journal*. <https://newprairiepress.org/sfh/2015/australia/3>

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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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HOW MAN SEIZED FIRE

Australian Aboriginal Folklore

Long ago the animals that now live in the bush were men. A tribe returning from a hunt encountered a very old man who told them a story. After a long, thirsty journey through the desert, he finally found water and came to a wooded land. When he saw flames through the trees, he looked closer to see a cockatoo take fire from under his crest. His own attempt to steal the fire had failed, but he encouraged the tribe he encountered to try to steal it. The tribe invited the cockatoo to a feast in hopes of stealing the fire, but they failed. When the

MARTUMILI NGURRA (DETAIL)
*Various artists from Martumilia Artists
As advised by Martumili Artists
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cockatoo left for his camp, a robin followed him. The Robin got too close, and his breast feathers were scorched. In his escape the brave robin managed to grab a fire stick and set the bush on fire. Once the cockatoo discovered his fire had been stolen, he searched for Robin. Kookaburra, in place of Robin, fought Robin's battle and lost. Kookaburra flew into the trees where he has remained since. This is how man seized fire, why the robin has a red breast, and why kookaburra sits in the tree.