

importance that there should be a copy in every household in South Africa. The author's coloured photographs of his living subjects are of a standard rarely surpassed, and the publishers must be congratulated on the excellence of their reproduction. A valuable table shows at a glance the distribution of those species likely to be responsible for snake bite accidents in proximity to the major towns and the general distribution of representatives of the three venomous groups is outlined with excellent line drawings to indicate their fang structure. The mode of 'spitting' from a fang is also illustrated. Especially important is the enumeration of the factors – of which the layman is mostly ignorant – affecting the severity of snakebite. A novel feature is a series of informative and useful questions and answers.

Comprehensive, but concise, this is a textbook which can be highly recommended to layman and scientist alike.

C. R. S. PITMAN

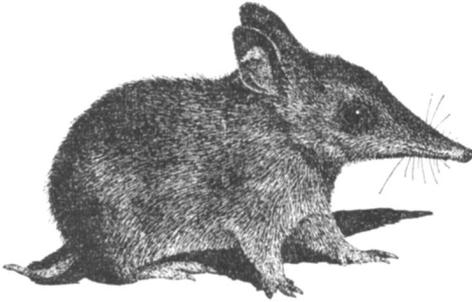
The Improbable Kangaroo and Other Australian Animals, by Axel Poignant, 45s. **Marsupials and Monotremes of Australia**, by Gordon Lyne, 30s. **The Life of the Kangaroo**, by Stanley & Kay Breeden, 30s. **Australian Snakes, Crocodiles, Tortoises, Lizards**, by Eric Worrell, 25s. All published by Angus & Robertson. **Australian Birds in Colour** by Keith Hindwood. A. H. Reed, 26s.

Axel Poignant's book has a dual impact: it is literally one man's view of Australian wildlife, since he happens to be a very talented photographer, and also an imaginative re-creation of the discovery of Australia's incredible fauna and the amazement of contemporary European naturalists. Although references were made to strange hopping beasts and pouched females by seventeenth century Dutch and English navigators, it was the late eighteenth century scientific explorations under Captain Cook and Joseph Banks that made these animals a reality. The harmful effects of introducing such species as the European rabbit and fox into Australia are well known, but the need for conservation of the unique native fauna cannot be over-emphasised. It is sad that more of the aboriginal names for native animals – koala, wombat, kangaroo – have not been retained, since the Australian aborigines provide an interesting if tenuous historical background to their continent, and their place names, such as Waukaringa, Chowerup and Naremben, are most euphonious. In such an interesting book, with its historical detail, it is the more regrettable that there is no bibliography and an index to the illustrations only.

Gordon Lyne's extremely careful drawings of two monotremes and 38 species of marsupials, based on photographs and the author's knowledge of the animals, evoke their subjects – the caricatural aspects of marsupial 'mice', the satanic felinity of 'native cats', the surly bulldog quality of the Tasmanian devil, and the thick-set, badger-like appearance of the common wombat. There are brief and accurate descriptions and a few photographs.

For three years, from May 1962, the Breedens spent much of their time observing and photographing the great grey kangaroos, *Macropus giganteus*, which dominate the wildlife of Bribie Island, in Moreton Bay in south-east Queensland. The island is 20 miles long, from three miles to 100 yards wide and barely rises to 25 feet above sea level. The result is a well-illustrated and pleasantly written general account of the life of the grey kangaroo, the behaviour of adults and young, and their reactions to predators, parasites and other wildlife.

In Eric Worrell's well illustrated picture book, with simple explanatory text and index, all but five of the photographs are by the author, whose presentation is clear and authoritative. The three groups of Australian reptiles – crocodiles; tortoises and turtles; snakes and lizards – are well defined, and the animals and



Little barred bandicoot from Gordon Lyne's Marsupials and Monotremes of Australia

their habitats described. The colour photographs of geckos, skinks and dragons are especially pleasing.

Australian bird life in general, and 52 species in particular, are described by Keith Hindwood and illustrated by eleven photographers of unquestioned excellence; 15 plates are by Norman Chaffer and 12 by Ellis McNamara. The author writes from the experience of over 40 years of ornithological study, and his brief account of the gradual discovery of Australia's native birds, which number some 700, refers fittingly to the part which bird lovers have played in furthering the cause of nature conservation.

HARRY V. THOMPSON

Waterfowl in Australia, by H. J. Frith. Angus and Robertson £5.

When I was working on *The Waterfowl of the World*, between 1954 and 1964, it became painfully apparent that far too little was known about Australian Anatidae. Having no great personal experience of those birds in their natural habitat, I could only rely on museum and captive specimens and on the meagre information so far published. I therefore tried to encourage Australian ornithologists to undertake a thorough study of these remarkable birds, a task which the present volume proves has been entirely successful. H. J. Frith, the very active and competent chief of the Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO, has written an excellent book of 328 pages, well illustrated and produced. There are many good photographs, maps and other figures, as well as five coloured plates depicting all the species concerned by Mrs Betty Temple Watts, which are altogether artistic and accurate. After very adequate chapters on the Family Anatidae, conservation and field identification, each Australian species is reviewed in detail, and the wealth of information has completely filled a gap in our knowledge.

Australian waterfowl are perhaps the most interesting in the world. Like so many other forms of life on that fascinating island-continent, a number of them are only very distantly related not only to one another, but to others inhabiting different countries. Such is the case of the Cape Barren goose *Cereopsis*, the magpie goose *Anseranas*, the freckled duck *Stictonetta* and the pink-eared duck *Malacorhynchus*. Mr Frith's work has done much to improve our understanding of those peculiar genera and their systematic position.

The larger species of Australian waterfowl – black swans, magpie and Cape Barren geese – have been destroyed much too freely in the past and their numbers became greatly reduced. The black swan has become numerous again as a consequence of protective measures, and its future appears safe, but the range of the magpie goose has shrunk considerably, and the very restricted habitat of the Cape Barren goose has made it very vulnerable. Proper measures are now being taken to preserve both them and the various species of ducks, all practically endemic to Australia. Mr Frith's work supplies the necessary basis for proper and practical protective measures.

J. DELACOUR