

LITERATURE

Edited by A. R. McEVEY

BOOKS

Report on the South African Biological and Geological Expedition—1965/1966. Ed. by E. M. van Zinderen Bakker, J. M. Winterbottom and R. A. Dyer. Cape Town: Balkema. \$NZ25.33.

At a time of increasing specialization it is a pleasure to find a book that not only maintains a high scientific standard but is also general in its coverage. This book follows the tradition of the reports of the great European scientific expeditions of almost a century ago and is a welcome addition to such works as Chilton's 'Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand' and the recent publications on Antarctica.

The various sections of this large book of 427 pages cover the climate, geology, botany, ornithology and zoology of Marion and Prince Edward Islands. Altogether there are 37 papers of which five deal with ornithology, one in a general section by E. M. van Z. Bakker, and four in the zoological section, three by the previous author and one by Dr J. M. Winterbottom. This paper 'The position of Marion Island in the subantarctic avifauna' is a detailed and authoritative review of the marine avifauna breeding in the Antarctic and Subantarctic. A number of interesting conclusions emerge from this review. Of the papers by Bakker, the first, 'Comparative avian ecology' covers the habitats of twenty-six species of breeding seabirds and their competition for food while rearing the chick. The second is a list of the birds observed at sea between Cape Town and Prince Edward Island. Thirdly, there is an extensive well-illustrated paper 'A behaviour analysis of the Gentoo Penguin', in which an annual cycle of the behavioural phases of this bird is worked out. The final ornithological paper 'The genus *Diomedea*' describes the breeding cycles of the Grey-headed Mollymawk, the Yellow-nosed Albatross and the Wandering Albatross, going into considerable detail with the last named.

This is a book for amateur and specialist. For the former it will have interest in the detailed descriptions of plant and bird-life, including the study of the behaviour of the Gentoo Penguin, all of which are illustrated with drawings and excellent photographs, often in colour. For the latter the book is an important contribution to our knowledge of subantarctic islands and is essential in the library of any institution or laboratory concerned with the plants, birds, invertebrates and geology of the antarctic and subantarctic regions.

G.W.R.

Australian Bush Birds by Harry Frauca, 1971. Melbourne: Lansdowne Press. Pp 133. Col. pl. 59, monochromes 45, 235 × 160 mm. \$A3.95.

Continuing the Lansdowne series on Australian ornithology this book gives information on some common birds that occur in the Australian bush. Thus it complements Chapman's 'Common Australian Birds of Towns

and Gardens' from the same publishers. The species dealt with range from birds of prey through the parrots to the honeyeaters.

In an early chapter, the 'bush' is defined and divided into major environmental zones. The main part of the book consists of one-page entries on selected species, each of which is depicted in colour, with notes on size, distribution, range, food, behaviour and calls. In other chapters there are an introduction to classification and nomenclature, a diagram of the external features of a typical bird, notes on behaviour such as preening, locomotion, fighting and courtship, and a guide to bird-study. One chapter is devoted to nests, eggs and young of some species such as the Wedge-tailed Eagle, White-throated Nightjar and Olive-backed Oriole. The book concludes with a bibliography and a list of ornithological societies. It gives valuable information mixed with some that is elementary or over-simplified.

The colour-plates are in the main satisfactory. The text is illustrated also by numerous black-and-white photographs, and these give some cause for concern. The unnatural poses of several of the subjects led this reviewer to suspect that they were sick or wounded at the time. One or two of the photographs are especially pathetic, the birds appearing to cringe away from the camera. The Grey Goshawk has a damaged cere, and one wonders whether it is tethered by the legs.

Mr Frauca displays a rather nonchalant attitude to bird photography. His efforts in this and other publications point to the need for some kind of ethical guide for naturalists in this country. One feels that the general aim of this book deserves a more demanding approach.

A.H.D'A.

Michael Morcombe's Birds of Australia 1971. Melbourne: Lansdowne Press Pty Ltd. Pp 80, col. pl. 97, numerous b. & w. drawings, 30 mm × 22 mm. \$A4.95.

Most Australian readers know that Michael Morcombe's photographs of birds are among the best produced in Australia. The examples in this book include some that are of great beauty and excellence. The book also provides brief information on the birds portrayed covering species of rainforest, inland, swamps, grassland, oceans, seashore, forest and woodland and representatives of groups such as honeyeaters, robins, parrots, wrens, and birds of prey. General notes on Australian bird families, techniques of photography, and birds of the major Australian regions add substance.

To me the value of the book lies elsewhere. It is in the insight it gives into birds as animals. Contemplation of the fall and stretch of the Twenty-eight Parrot on page 39 gives the beholder a sense of what it must feel like to be a bird with wings for arms. This is a significant and creative use of the camera enlarging our vision of nature.

A.R.McE.

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