

Book reviews

Information on threatened plants follows (including legal protection) together with (decidedly) useful addresses, including those of organizations involved in conservation, and botanic gardens. Herbaria are not included here; the Introduction provides a source reference if you want to know where these are. Any book that relies on such an extensive compilation from a wide variety of sources will inevitably harbour inconsistencies and omissions for any reviewer (this one, for instance, notices the omission of recent work on the Cape Verde flora). However, on the whole it is suprisingly free of errors and standards of production are high. One can only congratulate the authors, encourage them (or those who are left) to produce an updated edition in the not too distant future, and exhort everyone who reads this to buy a copy. A most valuable book.

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Kangaroos: Their Ecology and Management in the Sheep Rangelands of Australia

Graeme Caughley, Neil Shepherd and Jeff Short (Editors)

Cambridge University Press, 1987, 253 pp., HB £30.00 (\$49.50)

This is the first volume of a new series from the Cambridge University Press entitled Cambridge Studies in Applied Ecology and Resource Management. Although it is principally concerned with practical aspects of kangaroo management, the background information includes theoretical details of the population dynamics of the herbivores and of their food plants. The main purpose of the study was to compare plant/herbivore relations in a national park in the arid zone of New South Wales with those in a contiguous sheep station, which was ecologically similar apart from the presence of sheep. The herbivores studied were the red and the western grey kangaroo as well as the sheep. Rabbits and insects were also included in the study, but the work on these groups is not sufficiently advanced for inclusion in this book. This omission is not of great importance as Caughley mentions in his preface that neither rabbits nor insects exerted significant effects on the vegetation during the period of study.

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There is a brief introductory chapter that sets out the goals of the study and provides a short history of the sheep rangelands of Australia. The remaining 10 chapters deal in turn with a description of the rangelands, the effects of weather, plant dynamics, diets of the herbivores, factors affecting food intake, movements of kangaroos, population dynamics of kangaroos, the condition and reproductive success of kangaroos, ecological relationships and, finally, options for the management of kangaroos. Each chapter leads on from the previous one so that the book is well edited and gives the impression of having been written by a single author. The work is authoritative and provides a wealth of information on the biology of kangaroos as well as on their management. The final chapter considers the highly topical subject of the exploitation of kangaroos. It is disturbing to read that the commercial offtake from the population is regulated by market forces or the cost of harvesting, but not by the need to conserve the resource. This should, perhaps, be obvious by now from the history of whaling, but it seems that over-harvesting of wildlife in general makes economic sense even though it is ecologically disastrous.

This is an excellent book that augurs well for future volumes in the series.

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Studies of Mascarene Island Birds

Edited by A.W. Diamond

Cambridge University Press, 1987, 458 pp., HB £65.00 (US\$125.00)

The catastrophic impact of man and his associates upon the native avifauna of oceanic islands is nowhere more vividly illustrated than in the Mascarenes, the collective name for Mauritius, Réunion and Rodriguez. Hunting, habitat degradation and loss, cats, rats, pigs, monkeys, mongooses, introduced competitors and indeed virtually every force inimical to vulnerable island species has been unleashed here in a combined assault producing devastating results. The dodo has passed into legend and some 29 other endemic species into oblivion, while of the 20 endemics remaining no fewer than 11 are listed in the Red Book and include some of the most

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