

A Guide to the Native Mammals of Australia, by W. D. L. Ride. Oxford University Press, £4.25.

This volume is of outstanding value on many counts. It is comprehensive in covering not only the monotremes and marsupials that everyone associates with Australia, but also the placental rodents and bats which together constitute 45 per cent of the mammalian fauna. The systematic part includes all species, with a very brief statement of range and external recognition characters, and a selection are illustrated with excellent and delightful monochrome drawings by Ella Fry. As a work of reference it is therefore an invaluable supplement to Troughton's *Furred Animals of Australia*, incorporating as it does a great deal of more recent taxonomic and ecological information. The entire format is refreshingly original and practical. The species are arranged in 55 groups which are all easily recognisable from the examples illustrated, and most of the information is presented in the form of short chapters on each of these groups.

The more general chapters provide valuable accounts of the rarities, including those that have already become extinct, those that are probably still surviving in a very precarious state, and a few that have happily recovered from near extinction. Under the heading 'A Second Chance' the story is told of seven species in this last category, some, like the koala, now well established again after exploitation on an incredible scale, other, like Leadbeater's possum, rediscovered after being presumed extinct for many years. But the rarities of Australia are not confined to the marsupials. Of the fifty or so species of murid rodents, almost all endemic and extremely diverse in appearance and ecology, many are known only from a handful of specimens, and others, formerly common, are on the verge of extinction or have not been found for many years.

Perhaps the most remarkable of the 'second chances' is the case of the Parma wallaby, (described on page 40). While Australian zoologists were trying to trace the few preserved specimens of this apparently extinct species, New Zealanders were slaughtering them by the thousand as vermin. Dr Ride prefaces his account of this by a memorable remark attributed to a New Zealand politician, 'This species must not be allowed to become extinct again'.

G. B. CORBET

Australian Lizards by Robert Bustard. Collins, Sydney, Australia, £A5.95.

Australia has a remarkable reptilian fauna, especially rich in species of such interesting groups as the pythons and monitor lizards. The continent's herpetology has been sadly neglected in the past, but there has been a recent awakening of interest to which Dr Bustard has himself contributed much by his numerous studies of lizard ecology, and his work for turtle and crocodile conservation.

The author's acute awareness of the environment is evident throughout his book which begins, rather abruptly perhaps, with a description of the main physical features and vegetation of the continent. The general biology of lizards (senses, reproduction, etc.) is briefly but ably summarised and the major part of the book is devoted to an account of the various families. Many individual species are mentioned and discussed, but the emphasis, very reasonably in a book

of this kind, is placed on life history and habits rather than systematics. Many fascinating adaptations such as the ability of spiny-tailed geckos to squirt a sticky fluid from the skin of the tail at their enemies, and the remarkable way in which some of the flap-footed lizards (Pygopodidae) mimic snakes are described from first-hand observation.

Final chapters deal with the problem of conservation, which is particularly urgent in the case of some of the bigger species, such as the seven-foot perentie monitor of the desert regions; with profitable areas for future research, and with the care of lizards in captivity. There are excellent photographs, many in colour, and some attractive line drawings. The bibliography is useful, though a few important recent papers dealing with temperature regulations are omitted.

This valuable and clearly written book has a tremendous amount of up-to-date information in a short space. It will be much appreciated, not only in Australia, but by people who are interested in lizards all over the world.

A. d'A. BELLAIRS

Man against Nature, by R. M. Lockley. Deutsch £3 15.

Ao-tea-roa, the land of the long white cloud, as New Zealand was called by the colonising Maori, has found an enthusiastic though critical advocate in Ronald Lockley. But his book, although a 'Survival Special on New Zealand', is rather a description of the country from a naturalist's, farmer's and historical point of view, with a strong plea for preservation, than the balanced appreciation of the conservation situation for which the title leads one to hope. Moreover, his description of the coming of the Maori includes happenings and dates that are legendary, even mythical, and his tale would have lost nothing if he had made clear the speculative nature of its historical part.

Turning to the effect which the European settler has had on the environment, he describes the destruction of the indigenous forests, the terrible overgrazing, the replacement of native birds by European species, and, above all, the introduction, much of it deliberate, of foreign plants and wild mammals, especially deer and the opossum. But I wish that he had also discussed other major aspects of 'Man against Nature', such as mining, which, had it proved commercially profitable, would surely have destroyed Coppermine Island in spite of the conservationists' efforts; the demand for power, which still threatens the beauty of Lake Manapuri; and development, from which the supreme effort, mostly of one woman, has partially saved Farewell Spit.

The book's great value, however, lies in the author's plea that New Zealand should pause awhile in her rush for commercialisation and adopt a stronger conservation policy; that she should realize that 'in a world on the verge of starvation her fortune is to be a well-fed nation, with abundant farm and forest produce and unlimited fish as her main asset, and that these are the country's real hope of maintaining her present high standard of life'.

This is a good book, well illustrated. May it be used to convince those who demand unlimited industrial expansion and those who follow the 'she'll be right' expression of some New Zealanders, that the path of unlimited exploitation leads but to desolation.

LEOFRIC BOYLE