

handbook for identification. One of its most welcome features is that it deals in a rational and up-to-date manner with the principles of taxonomy as applied to European mammals. Both professional and amateur mammalogists have felt for many years that their researches have had to be based on a taxonomy that was out of date. Dr Corbet, continuing the tradition of mammal research coming from the British Museum, now gives us a checklist of west European mammals, which incorporates conclusions from much recent, but scattered, taxonomic work. Much, obviously, remains to be done, but the nomenclature of European mammals, at least to the species level, can be regarded as having achieved some stability. Understandably, he gives only a skeleton bibliography, referring mainly to standard works and monographs.

Following the opening chapter on taxonomy is a short one on distribution which enunciates some interesting principles and processes. An excellent "potted" account follows of the structure of mammals which amateurs should not, and professionals will not, neglect. Then, after all too brief chapters on life-history and ecology (the latter, however, containing a valuable list of groups of animals parasitic upon mammals) the author launches on his systematic account which occupies two-thirds of the book.

By and large this part maintains an excellent evenness of approach throughout, giving a bird's-eye view of the mammal fauna of the area and of its inter-relationships without overloading the text with detail. There are keys to orders, families, genera and species and, where appropriate, these are repeated on external and on skull characters, though it should be noted that many of the external characters need the animal in the hand for determination. Distributions are described in the text, except where a few maps are provided (these are, however, almost diagrams, lacking lines of latitude and longitude and method of projection). The life-history is then given in varying degrees of fullness and, if a monograph has been published, it is cited. Particularly valuable are the paragraphs setting each family and genus against its world background.

The production is good, though the photographs are undistinguished. There are remarkably few mistakes, though the reviewer was delighted to find that the scops owl has been attributed to a hitherto unknown ornithologist named Scop! In summary, there is no question that this book will deservedly find a wide audience.

H. N. SOUTHERN

The Book of Australian Wildlife, by Harry Frauca. Heineman, 42s.

The author is a professional collector and photographer of animals who appreciates the need to live in the bush to do his work properly, and the advantages of photographing anything of interest that comes his way, rather than making special trips in pursuit of particular species. He has learned to reject preconceived notions and to keep an open mind about animal behaviour. A self-taught naturalist, he sensibly seeks the advice of specialists and through his reading tries to keep abreast of current thinking.

His book consists of short chapters, dealing with Insects, Arachnids, Crabs, Frogs, Reptiles, Birds, Monotremes, Marsupials, placental mammals and introduced species. The text is a mixture of first-hand observations, the fruits of his reading, and some anecdotes; it is quite informative and pleasant general reading, although the style is uneven and sometimes

journalistic. He rightly gives considerable space to the marsupials but surprisingly makes no reference to the marsupial wolf *Thylacinus cynocephalus*, accidentally killed in 1961 (reported in Oryx VIII, 307). I fully agree with the statement about the Tasmanian devil *Sarcophilus harrisi* that "although many marsupials are fairly silent, the devil's voice is loud and frightening, and I know of no more awesome animal chorus than that of four devils crying away in the night in a series of grunts and barks and howls that could have awakened the dead!" The chapter on introduced mammals curiously omits any reference to the water buffalo so abundant in the coastal areas of the Northern Territory, nor is there any mention of the American grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* in Melbourne, or the palm squirrel *Funambulus* in Sydney and Western Australia.

There is often needless slaughter and cruelty to wildlife, in Australia as elsewhere, and the author's plea for the preservation of Australia's unique fauna is genuine and valid. But his statement that conservation in Australia is non-existent is just not true, and gives no credit to the work of Federal and State wildlife agencies which have worked for conservation for decades.

Some of the 157 photographs, especially of insects, amphibians and reptiles, are good, but most are indifferent; crowded three or more to a page, they are too small to do justice to their subjects.

HARRY V. THOMPSON

The Birds of Chile and Adjacent Regions of Argentina, Bolivia and Peru, Vol. 1, by A. W. Johnson. Author, c/o K. Johnson, S.A.C., Casilla 327, Santiago, Chile, £7.

In 1946-51 A. W. Johnson, in collaboration with J. D. Goodall and R. A. Philippi B., published *Las Aves de Chile* in Spanish. In fifty years of active work the authors had accumulated first-hand observations and numerous discoveries about birds whose habits were in many respects almost unknown. This standard book is now being made available in English, and this first volume deals with the Orders from Penguins to Waders. It is not a mere translation of the Spanish text. The field has been broadened to include the entire southern part of South America, northwards to the Peruvian and Bolivian plateau. Moreover the author has made many additions as a result of recent discoveries about Chilean birds, and some are of the highest interest. The paragraphs dealing with James's flamingo and the torrent duck have been particularly enlarged.

The book gives a detailed description of all the birds recorded from Chile or adjacent regions, their measurements, geographical range and habitat, and a short but very interesting account of their habits, including descriptions of nest and eggs when known. The text is illustrated by 100 colour plates by J. D. Goodall. Their artistic value, as the author admits, is low compared with the plates published in modern field-guides, but after using the Spanish edition widely in the field, I can testify that they are accurate and give a faithful picture of the birds in their environment. A wide range of photographs supplements the information on habitats and nest-sites.

Well produced and printed, this book is a most valuable source of information on the birds of the southern regions of South America. It will contribute materially to the advancement of ornithology in this part of the world, and, we hope, ensure better protection of these birds. We look forward eagerly to the second volume of this standard work.

JEAN DORST