

REVIEWS

The Parrots of Australia, by William R. Eastman Jr. and Alexander C. Hunt. Angus and Robertson, Sydney. 1966. 194 + XIV pp. Price: \$10.00.

When the late Neville Cayley wrote and illustrated "Australian Parrots", which was published in 1938, he set a standard in compilation and artistry that would be hard to surpass. At the risk of being regarded as prejudiced I feel that this attractively-produced book on the Australian Psittacidae falls well below Cayley's publication. Parrots are probably the most varied and colourful of Australian birds and some are among the best-known. However, being greatly favoured by aviculturalists, any well-illustrated book on them is sure to prove popular. It could be said that "Australian Parrots" was written by an ornithologist who liberally added avicultural notes, whilst "The Parrots of Australia" was compiled by an aviculturalist (part-authorship at least, for A. C. ("Sandy") Hunt is a successful breeder of Australian parrots in aviaries) who liberally included ornithological information.

This book is profusely illustrated, all species and some races being portrayed in colour. Pleasing are the eight pages of "Some Australian Parrots in their Habitats" (although some of these colour photographs were surely taken inside aviaries), and the ten pages of black-and-white photos showing various habitats. In the latter "Banksia blossoms" appears to be a wrong title for flowering *Callistemon*. The paintings (by Eastman) are pleasing. The captions for the Musk Lorikeet and Scaly-breasted Lorikeet on page 25 have been reversed and some of the *Neophema* parrots on page 151 show square tails!

Data given for each species include various headings, but is very abbreviated and too much is at times placed under "remarks", the short abbreviated sentences giving a "jerky" type of dialogue. Sixty species are accepted and these are placed in eleven groups—Brush Tongues, Fig-eaters, Cockatoos, Polytenine Group, Aprosmictus Group, Rosellas, Barnardius Group, Psephotus Group, Neophema Group, Ground-nesters and "Individuals" (Quarrior, Red-capped (called Pileated) Parrot, Budgerigah, Swift Parrot and Bourke Parrot). The Red-cheeked Parrot is grouped with the Fig-eaters and the Red-sided (called Eclectus) Parrot is with the Cockatoos!

A commendable innovation is the use of distribution maps, which depict the range of each species in clearly-visible fashion. However, not enough research was made of published data. *Calyptorhynchus banksii* is the only member of the Psittacidae accorded a continent-wide distribution, whilst in reality it now occurs only in widely-scattered isolated colonies. In New South Wales, for instance, it is doubtful if it is found, except for very occasional reports, nowadays elsewhere than in the vicinity of the Darling River. Information in *The Emu* does not appear to have been checked, for in 1960 I reviewed the range in New South Wales of *Neophema* species and showed that the Blue-winged Parrot is regular in movements and well-dispersed over most of western areas. The map in "The Parrots of Australia" gives its range as a small portion of coastal Victoria and South Australia and northern Tasmania! Much of western New South Wales is included for *Neophema elegans* but in 1960 I queried whether there was any acceptable record for that State. The Bourke Parrot's range should have been extended further into south-

western Western Australia and that of the Superb Parrot beyond its shown northern and eastern limits. Northern Tasmania only is shown in the map for the Ground Parrot, but its stronghold there is in the south-west. The distribution given for the Princess Parrot includes north-western New South Wales and I sure would be happy to know of a record anywhere near that State. Nevertheless, distribution is mainly a matter of personal knowledge and acceptance of published observations, and the reader will certainly find much information between the covers of "The Parrots of Australia" and renew interest with a group which includes what has at times been termed the "spoiled children of the bird world".

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Australian Bird Calls. Recorded by Frank Cusack and Redvers J. Eddy. Processed, pressed and distributed throughout Australia by W & G Distributing Co. Pty. Ltd. Cat. No. WG-B-2493. Price \$5.25.

This 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m. 12-inch L.P. disc records the calls of thirty species of birds from a variety of habitats which are grouped into Birds of the Open Grassland and Light Timber, Birds of the Mountain Forests, Birds of the Dry Interior and Scrublands, and Birds of the Open Forests. I have had considerable experience with all but two of the recorded calls—the Port Lincoln Parrot and the Silver-crowned Butcher-bird; the call of the latter species is so like that of its relative the Grey Butcher-bird that any difference is difficult to determine.

The calls generally are excellently recorded and will bring back pleasant memories to many ornithologists while other listeners will hear a delightful rendition of bird calls beyond their expectation.

Some listeners may fail to recognise the notes of the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, expecting the more characteristic melodious warble so often heard from this bird in western New South Wales. The tinkling of the numerous Bell-miners seems to have lost some of the individuality that combines to make the chorus so resonant. Although the diagnostic territorial call of the Lyrebird is missing, most listeners will recognise the typically versatile mimicry of this master songster.

A suitable commentary by Frank Cusack introduces each call and the approximate playing time including commentary varies, with the exception of the Crested Bell-bird, between thirty seconds and nearly three minutes. The less musical ones such as the parrots, are logically brief. The overall playing time is a little over forty-five minutes and while many people might prefer to have seen the disc reduced in size and price by shortening individual calls, I am certain that those who have spent many hours listening to bird calls in their natural habitats will be glad that the authors decided this way.

A coloured photo by Graham Pizzey of a Superb Lyrebird on its dancing mound is featured on the cover. The reverse side gives a short dissertation on the reasons and circumstances of bird song generally followed by a list of the species with references to text books, the season and location of the recordings.

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