

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