



Little barred bandicoot from Gordon Lyne's Marsupials and Monotremes of Australia

their habitats described. The colour photographs of geckos, skinks and dragons are especially pleasing.

Australian bird life in general, and 52 species in particular, are described by Keith Hindwood and illustrated by eleven photographers of unquestioned excellence; 15 plates are by Norman Chaffer and 12 by Ellis McNamara. The author writes from the experience of over 40 years of ornithological study, and his brief account of the gradual discovery of Australia's native birds, which number some 700, refers fittingly to the part which bird lovers have played in furthering the cause of nature conservation.

HARRY V. THOMPSON

Waterfowl in Australia, by H. J. Frith. Angus and Robertson £5.

When I was working on *The Waterfowl of the World*, between 1954 and 1964, it became painfully apparent that far too little was known about Australian Anatidae. Having no great personal experience of those birds in their natural habitat, I could only rely on museum and captive specimens and on the meagre information so far published. I therefore tried to encourage Australian ornithologists to undertake a thorough study of these remarkable birds, a task which the present volume proves has been entirely successful. H. J. Frith, the very active and competent chief of the Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO, has written an excellent book of 328 pages, well illustrated and produced. There are many good photographs, maps and other figures, as well as five coloured plates depicting all the species concerned by Mrs Betty Temple Watts, which are altogether artistic and accurate. After very adequate chapters on the Family Anatidae, conservation and field identification, each Australian species is reviewed in detail, and the wealth of information has completely filled a gap in our knowledge.

Australian waterfowl are perhaps the most interesting in the world. Like so many other forms of life on that fascinating island-continent, a number of them are only very distantly related not only to one another, but to others inhabiting different countries. Such is the case of the Cape Barren goose *Cereopsis*, the magpie goose *Anseranas*, the freckled duck *Stictonetta* and the pink-eared duck *Malacorhynchus*. Mr Frith's work has done much to improve our understanding of those peculiar genera and their systematic position.

The larger species of Australian waterfowl – black swans, magpie and Cape Barren geese – have been destroyed much too freely in the past and their numbers became greatly reduced. The black swan has become numerous again as a consequence of protective measures, and its future appears safe, but the range of the magpie goose has shrunk considerably, and the very restricted habitat of the Cape Barren goose has made it very vulnerable. Proper measures are now being taken to preserve both them and the various species of ducks, all practically endemic to Australia. Mr Frith's work supplies the necessary basis for proper and practical protective measures.

J. DELACOUR