

BOOK REVIEWS (Continued)

KOOKABURRAS. Veronica A. Parry, published by Landsdowne Press, 1970, hardback, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 110 pp., 6 colour plates, 46 black and white photos and diagrams. Price \$4.25.

This monograph is a popularised adaptation of studies for which the author was awarded her M.Sc. following two and a half years' research while attached to Monash University, Victoria.

Miss Parry is to be commended for the painstaking care with which she has pursued her studies of tagged Kookaburras—revealing a social organization which most people had not expected in a kingfisher. The Kookaburra is yet another Australian species which has evolved a social system which uses auxiliaries to assist in incubation, brood rearing and defence of communal territory. Behaviour, courtship, breeding, territory defence, food, predation, plumage and vocal communication are all well covered. These subjects are all presented in an interesting way and make absorbing reading. The book is a valuable and welcome addition to the monographic literature about Australian birds.

However, it is regrettable that the text shows many obvious signs of hasty and careless padding out and "writing down" for the general public. It is, for example, stretching an analogy too far to say the Kookaburra's social structure and territorial system is "in some ways identical to our own"; and it is particularly irritating, in the work of a qualified zoologist, to read that "occasionally eating small birds . . . must be forgiven" because of "the beneficial job kookaburras do for humans through their relish for insects and reptiles." Perhaps some colleague with wider interests has had a talk with Miss Parry since she penned this gem.

The distribution map wrongly shows Yorke Peninsula and most of the Murray Mallee as being within the Kookaburra's range, and fails to include lower Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island. In view of the wide availability of Condon's "Handlist of the Birds of South Australia" in reference libraries throughout Australia, it seems reasonable to wonder about the thoroughness of the author's research into distribution in other States.

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