

BOOK REVIEWS

AUSTRALIAN PARROTS – A FIELD AND AVIARY STUDY, by B.R. Hutchins and R.H. Lovell, published by the Avicultural Society of Australia: Melbourne, 1985. pp. 200. Price including postage \$18.

This publication completely revises, and brings together in book form, a series of articles first published in *Bird Keeping in Australia*, and reprinted in *Australian Aviculture*.

My first impression of the book, possibly partly due to the similar titles, is that it is akin to Lendon's 1973 revision of N.W. Cayley's *Australian Parrots in Field and Aviary*, Angus & Robertson: Sydney. In some respects this is borne out by the similarities in style and content of these books. Both describe the plumage and various forms of each species in some detail, give details of distribution and habitat and devote much space to describing each species' behaviour and requirements in captivity.

There are however important differences. The data provided by Hutchins and Lovell in the introductory chapters (titled Management, Housing, Feeding and Diseases) and in the individual species accounts are among the best available for those wishing to keep parrots in captivity. The information is presented in readable style and is up to date. However it does not cover any Cockatoos or several other species which are rare or infrequently kept in captivity.

Species accounts are divided into the headings: Description, Habitat, Captive Breeding, Feeding and First Official Breeding. This provides much of interest for the ornithologist, including original observations from throughout Australia and descriptions of displays and breeding routines seen in the authors' aviaries. Distribution maps are given

for each species. However apart from the cover photograph of Regent Parrots *Polytelis anthopeplus* and Western Rosellas *Platycercus icterotis*, there are no species illustrations. The authors have acknowledged that the extra cost was unwarranted when excellent illustrations are available elsewhere.

The sections titled "Distribution" and "Habitat" appear reasonably thorough and accurate and a considerable amount of general information is included here.

While a number of distinctive subspecies have been treated separately in the text, and this is to be commended, the authors have gone too far with at least one instance of taxonomic comment based on field observations. The statement that Bluebonnets *Psephotus haematogaster* seen on the Kallakoopah Creek and on the lower Cooper Creek were intermediate between *P.h. pallescens* and *P.h. haematogaster* should be ignored. My experience with Bluebonnets in this region is that there is a good deal of individual variation anyway.

In summary this book should be a useful and inexpensive acquisition for all those with an interest in this group of birds.

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