

Leigh M. Van Valen
 Biology Department (Whitman)
 The University of Chicago
 915 East 57th Street
 Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Received February 27, 1985

Vertebrate Zoogeography and Evolution in Australasia, edited by M. Archer and G. Clayton. 1984. Carlisle, Western Australia (65 Oats St.): Hesperian Press. xxiv + 1203 pp. + at least 18 colored plates. A\$55.00 + A\$14.00 overseas shipping.

The Aussies already have the best general books on insects (The Insects of Australia) and on a reasonably large group of mammals (Carnivorous Marsupials, recently edited by the same ubiquitous Archer as above). But a Tasmanian devil's reach should exceed its grasp, or what's a heaven for? (Devils did use to live on the Australian mainland. No further comment.) And so comes this enormous (21 x 29 cm pages), fascinating, wide-ranging, inexpensive (4 cents U.S./ page, including shipping), readable, authoritative gem of Australiana to top them all.

It's supposed to be a text for an Antipodean course on vertebrate zoogeography. Quite a course that must be. No Northern Hemisphere chauvinism here; the real world centers on Australia. (New Zealand and New Guinea get not much more than a nose in.) The book is physically but not mentally ponderous. The science is good throughout; in fact I was astonished to notice no real errors of omission or commission at all, although some interpretations may not withstand scrutiny. (And I don't think that Texans even now take kindly to being called Yanks.) But the book is light-hearted. There are one to several drawings, and occasionally photographs, on almost every page, and they and the text are punctuated with an appropriate, non-intrusive humor. The many authors blend together reasonably well.

The treatment is primarily of historical biogeography rather than the ecological or analytical approaches, although ecology does come in from time to time. There are introductory chapters on more general topics, followed by a set for each class. (Marine fishes, but not marine mammals, are excluded.) A 175-page review of Australian marsupials starts with an apology for being short. Some emphasis is placed on phylogeny and the fossil record, and there are stratigraphically detailed checklists of all Australian fossil species. Other chapters, shorter, are specific case histories.

I can't summarize the book or do it justice. Get it. Have it available. It is jam-packed with information. There is even some interesting and original science scattered throughout. It is too bad that this will probably be lost to most research workers by being included here in such a long "text"; the publisher says the original work will not appear elsewhere.

Anybody for putting the rest of the world back on the map?

*

*

*

Le véritable Lamarck

We have also received the following book for review, and it merits a brief note:

Zoological Philosophy, by J.B. Lamarck. Translation reprinted 1984, with old and modern commentaries and another excerpt from Lamarck's work. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press. lxvi + 453 pp. \$30.00 cloth, \$15.00 paper. The modern commentaries, specially written for this reprint, are on Lamarck's zoological philosophy, by R.W. Burkhardt, Jr., and on Lamarck's checkered history in the English-speaking world, by D.L. Hull. The old one is Cuvier's anti-eulogy (kakology?)

- L. M. Van Valen

*

*

*

Evolutionary Theory 7: 172 (March, 1985)

© 1985, Biology Department, The University of Chicago