

REVIEW

The Life of the Kookaburra and Other Kingfishers, by William Eastman. Angus and Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1970. \$3.75.

Books on families, orders or genera should be more frequent; for not only do they give broad comparisons of a number of species but they give the author scope to discuss evolutionary and ecological processes.

The present book, though interesting enough, does not fulfil its potentialities. It is rather repetitious — which to some extent is understandable when one is dealing with a family — but a considerable amount of the repetition could have been avoided and replaced with other material, so preventing an already not very large book becoming too small. However, having read it you will certainly know a considerable amount about the kingfishers of Australia. There are a number of pleasant colour plates to show you what they look like and many black and white photographs which will give you a good idea of their habitats, though many are a little disappointing or poorly reproduced.

What should have been the opening chapter — a discussion on classification, general ecology and behaviour — comes after two chapters on the kookaburras; but perhaps the author — or the publishers — thought that to begin with two chapters on general interest would be more appealing to the public than something rather more technical.

I was surprised to learn that some Sacred Kingfishers migrate to New Zealand. This statement is made without any supporting evidence and certainly gives the impression that it is a factual rather than a purely hypothetical statement.

There is a distribution map for each species (a good idea which should be used more often by others) but the map for the Little Kingfisher seems at variance with the text.

Since only the Sacred Kingfisher and the Laughing Kookaburra occur in New Zealand, the book will probably have a limited appeal to ornithologists in this country; but it is worth reading and an example of the sort of thing that could be done — and done more comprehensively — for some families of New Zealand birds.

— G.R.W.