

## REVIEWS

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*Handbook of the Birds of New Guinea* by Austin L. Rand and E. Thomas Gilliard. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1967; pp. 1-612; 76 plates of black and white illustrations and 5 colour plates.

Dr. Rand is Chief Curator of Zoology in the Field Museum, Chicago, and the late Dr. Gilliard (he died on 27 January, 1965) was Associate Curator of Birds at the American Museum of Natural History, New York. Between them they have produced a fine and very useful book.

After a brief introduction and explanation of the plan of the work there is a synopsis of the Orders of the New Guinea species, followed by a map, general information on New Guinea, climate, altitudinal zonation, etc., and then the main body of the book. The plan is to describe each family followed by a description and brief account of the habits of the species and subspecies in each family. Surprisingly little is known of the life-history of many New Guinea birds. I notice an occasional misprint, e.g. *Cosmerodius* for *Casmerodius* on p. 34. There are some surprising bits of information. How many New Zealand ornithologists knew Wilson's Storm Petrel reached New Guinea? Possibly everyone but this ignorant reviewer; but I doubt it.

The black and white illustrations by Douglas E. Tibbitts are adequate and competent; those by Albert E. Gilbert are superb, as are his colour plates, although I do not like the pale green background used for a couple of them.

This is an indispensable book. I wish I had had it when in New Guinea last year and shall certainly take it on any future trip even though, of necessity, the bulk is a little much for carrying in the field.

—R.J.S.



*Nature Walkabout* by Vincent Serventy, A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1967, \$3.75.

To ornithologists in Australia and the Pacific the name of Serventy is a household word. Now in "*Nature Walkabout*" we have a vivid account, from a younger member of the clan, of a migration which he and his wife and children made from Perth to Sydney by way of the north. Vincent and Carol Serventy are expert photographers and give their readers — who will be many — an appetising sample from the infinite variety of wildlife and scenery in Australia's vast teeming continent. Aboriginal man, marsupials, birds, reptiles, flowers, rock formations, billabongs, all are pictured and excellently reproduced in colour. The text is direct and evocative. "Townsville's residents are lucky to have at their front door a huge stretch of common land on which thousands of brolgas feed and dance."

This is just the book to offer as a parting gift to the dedicated naturalist with itchy feet who is setting off to enjoy the unique and exciting wonderland of New Zealand's gigantic neighbour.

— R.B.S.