

## REVIEWS.

**A Handbook of the Birds of Western Australia**, by D. L. Serventy and H. M. Whittell, 1948. Pattersons Press, Ltd., Perth; 365 pp., 2 col. plates and 32 text figs. (15/- Aust. currency.)

Two leaders of ornithology in West Australia offer a book which "they wished had been available to them when beginning the study of local birds." Introductory sections cover history of exploration and bird geography, a valuable synthesis. The detailed treatment of each of 355 species includes aboriginal and other names, outline description, detailed distribution in West Australia, nesting and habits, migration. Separate indices cover history, vernacular names, native names, and scientific names. The format is attractive and the text crammed with useful and interesting matter: important field characters are italicised for emphasis. Subspecies are not dealt with, references to literature are generally omitted and there is no bibliography; perhaps such technical trimmings are out of place in a beginner's book any way. The illustrations are mostly good but lamentably few. But as the Emu reviewer concluded, "there are really 'no complaints'" and our chief reaction is envy—when will a New Zealand ornithologist find time, inclination, and a publisher to offer us something like this?—C.A.F.

**The Three Kings Islands: New Zealand's Northern Outliers. Records of the Auckland Institute and Museum; Vol. 3, Nos. 4 and 5; pp. 189-341; December, 1948. (Special Three Kings Number, containing 15 papers on the natural history of the archipelago.)**

New Zealand naturalists are so accustomed to waiting long years for the scientific reports of expeditions to see the light of publication that they will welcome this meaty volume containing the results of some six visits to the Three Kings Islands by parties or individual officers of the Auckland Museum staff between 1934 and 1948. Because the Museum "Records" may not be readily accessible to all who are interested in Three Kings birds, this review is an attempt to summarise the relevant parts of the publication, which includes contributions on chronology of exploration, geography, rocks, Maori carvings, flora and vegetation, the effect of goats, land invertebrates, lizards and birds.

The Three Kings Islands, 35 miles north-west of Cape Reinga, lie "east and west in a serrated line," and access is hindered by "precipitous coast, strong tidal currents and the heavy swell." A new map of the group (courtesy Lands and Survey Department) appears as a frontispiece, but it lacks scale, latitude and longitude, and even an author to blame for these not unimportant omissions! Great Island (1000 acres), once clothed in coastal forest, has "undergone profound changes during early Maori settlement (before 1840) and later as the result of the influence of goats"; the three other sizeable islands are "still covered except on the most rocky cliffs, by dense forest and scrub." Cheeseman listed the birds observed on Great and South West Islands in 1887 and 1889, and a few later records for Great Island have been published. The group was declared a sanctuary in 1930. The intrepid landings from a yacht on North East, South West and one of the Princes Islands by M. F. Johnson and G. A. Buddle in 1947 and 1948 provided data to supplement bird observations made on longer visits to Great Island by E. G. Turbott, P. C. Bull and G. A. Buddle, particularly on the "Arbutus" (1945) and Internal Affairs Wild Life Branch (1946) expeditions.

G. A. Buddle (The Outlying Islands of the Three Kings Group, pp. 195-204) gives a modest account of his landings on the smaller islets, with notes on the plants and birds of these precipitous rocks. Everyone will read between the lines of his restrained narrative of the assault on North East Island. We can all envy the experience of two enthusiastic naturalists setting foot where none has gone since Maori times.

The Internal Affairs Expedition, accompanied by E. G. Turbott, camped five weeks on Great Island and succeeded in exterminating the goats, 393 or 398 in number (authorities differ, but no matter). The first significant results of vegetational regeneration are recorded. Turbott (Effect of Goats on Great Island, Three Kings, with Descriptions of