

critically. A good example is his questioning of Pedersen's hypothesis of a continual circumpolar "migration" of the entire polar bear population over a period of years. There are many reasons for suspecting this idea, although polar bears do drift with the pack ice at times.

Some details mar the book, but not seriously. Photographs are tastelessly jammed together (with superimposed typewritten captions), and errors are common in the list of scientific names of Arctic animals in an appendix. But there is a useful range map, bibliography and index.

Mr. Perry concludes that polar bears have a precarious future, and that immediate, concerted action is necessary to save them. He is in an ideally neutral and well-informed position for assessing the situation, which gives the greatest force to his statement. His main concern is for the polar bear.

C. R. HARINGTON

Mongoose, Their Natural History and Behaviour, by H. E. Hinton and A. M. S. Dunn. Oliver & Boyd, 42s.

Owing perhaps to the diurnal activity of many species, the mongooses are one of the better known groups of small carnivores, but as with the majority of taxonomic groups of vertebrates the relevant literature is exceedingly fragmented and scattered. Professor Hinton and Miss Dunn have therefore done a useful service in bringing together much of this information into a single volume (over 250 references are listed).

No detailed ecological study appears to have been made of any species of mongoose in its native range, and the information comes largely from casual observations on wild mongooses in Africa and Asia; from more detailed studies of introduced mongooses on the Caribbean islands and Hawaii; and (predominantly) from animals in captivity, especially the South African meerkat *Suricata suricatta* whose behaviour in captivity has been subjected to careful study by ethologists. In spite of the addition of chapters on mongooses in Indian folk tales, in Ancient Egypt, and as pets, the book remains a compilation of rather disjointed facts with little attempt to draw from these any overall picture of the group and little evidence of personal involvement with mongooses that might commend it for continuous reading rather than reference. A final chapter lists the 36 species of mongooses with a statement of distribution and lists of subspecies, synonyms and local names. Only for seven species is other information given under species headings, and the sixteen plates of photographs illustrate only four of the 36 species.

G. B. CORBET

Animals and Birds in Australia, by Graham Pizzey. Cassell, £5 5s. This is a very pleasant introduction to the wildlife of Australia, with many fine photographs. The author deals with a hundred species, ranging from corals to possums; and here one must murmur against the title which perpetuates the idea that birds are not "animals". The arrangement in sections, under such titles as "The Great Hardwood Forests" and "Bass Strait" is rather unsatisfactory, but under each of these headings a useful sketch of the ecology and history is given. Oddly, the nearest thing to a contents list is the alphabetical list of species at the end of the book.

The book has an appeal at more levels than one. On the one hand many of the pictures—24 full-page colour plates and 250 black-and-white photographs—have a charm that reaches out to the very young. On the other hand the three-page introduction includes a judicious thumbnail sketch of the past of the Australian continent as a theatre for evolution. Moreover a distribution map is provided for each species and, in an appendix, the scientific name. The text accompanying

each species is informative and usually well selected; perhaps the statement that "the frogmouths are related to the nightjars and the swallows" (for swifts) is the only slip of its kind. With commendable honesty the author tells the reader which of his sitters was photographed in other than fully natural conditions.

The author is an ardent conservationist, who, certainly with justice, sees much to condemn in the attitude of the generality of his countrymen towards their wonderful fauna even at the present day. The appearance of a book like this cannot fail to help his cause.

R. E. MOREAU

Four-legged Australians, by Bernhard Grzimek. Collins, 45s.

Dr. Grzimek, the famous Director of the Frankfurt Zoo, recently visited Australia and New Guinea, to see, in their wild state, the fauna of this remote continent, which for tens of thousands of years has been isolated from the rest of the world. This book describes what he saw and learnt, illustrated with magnificent photographs in both colour and black-and-white. In every chapter he sheds light on the purpose of the marvellous works of nature. He writes of the megapodes who build incubators for their eggs, which the male bird tends with great care and skill; the marsupial gliders which are descended from three quite separate families, the marsupial wolf, which, as ORYX readers know, is believed to exist still in Tasmania although it has not been seen by man for a decade; the egg-laying mammals, or monotremes, which are unique to Australia; the marsupials, whose pouches are back to front, a typical example of the miraculous design of nature—in the case of the koala the reason has only recently been discovered; the dingo, one of the earliest settlers from overseas, which can still be seen in considerable numbers in the outback—I have found them in the forests within a few miles of Brisbane. About kangaroos, he notes that the Wild Life Section of CSIRO have only recently discovered that each of the two teats in the females pouch gives a different beverage, one suitable for the youngest member of the family, the other to meet the needs of the joey which is soon to be weaned. In a chapter on "The Birds of Paradise and the Stone Age Men of New Guinea" he paints a vivid picture, on the one hand of some of the most gorgeously feathered and beautiful birds in the world, and on the other of their enemies, the primitive tribes, whose customs are often unbelievably barbarous, but who are being guided, humanely and effectively, towards a civilised way of life.

In a chapter on the rabbit he clearly shows how much extensive research work is required, over many years, before a true picture can be obtained.

The revelations which Dr. Grzimek unfolds throughout this great book fills the mind with wonder; it should be read not only as an account of the Australian fauna, but by everyone who appreciates the marvels of nature.

H. ABEL SMITH

Tropical Fishes of the Great Barrier Reef, by Tom C. Marshall. Angus and Robertson, 75s.

It is two hundred years since Sydney Parkinson, and later Georg Forster, official artists on Cook's first and second voyages, brought home folders of coloured drawings, many of the former's depicting Australian fishes. For more than fifty years these sketches, although never published, were drawn upon by European naturalists for descriptions of new Australian species. By the 1880's, however, several lists, catalogues and descriptive papers on fishes had been published in Australia, and the Australian fish fauna became reasonably well-known. An important contribution was Marshall's *Fishes of the Great Barrier Reef*, published in 1964, of which the present book is a scaled-down version.