

BOOK REVIEW

Mammals of Australia

Walton D. W. and B. J. Richardson, eds. 1989. Fauna of Australia. Mammalia. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1B: X + 401 - 1227. Price (hardbound) \$79.95, index ISBN 0-644-06056-5.

This volume of the "Fauna of Australia" is one of a ten volume series. It represents the first attempt to deal with the general biology of the entire mammalian fauna of Australia in a comprehensive manner. The emphasis is made on the non-feral portion of mammals, although some recently introduced species are also taken into account. All the descriptions are done at the family level. The sequence in which families appeared and the nomenclature employed follows the 5th volume of the "Zoological Catalogue of Australia. Mammalia".

The book is divided into 51 main chapters, preceded by preface, names and addresses of contributors, and table of contents. The first chapter gives recently accepted diagnosis of the class Mammalia and presents our current understanding of the phylogenetic relationships of the major groups of amniote tetrapods. The diagnosis is followed by detailed family accounts and chapters covering introductory sections for *Metatheria* and *Eutheria*. Each family account includes definition of the family and its general description, history of discovery, morphology and physiology, natural history (including economic significance), and biogeography and phylogeny. The next section is devoted to methods of collecting and preserving mammals. Keys of both external and cranial features to the generic level follow the chapter on collection and preservation. A 55-page index concludes the book.

The "Fauna of Australia. Mammalia" was intended to reach the broadest possible audience. That is why, perhaps, the specialist will find some sections too general. On the other hand, the book provides a general review of up-to-date literature and clearly demonstrates where significant gaps of knowledge lie.

The book is well written and illustrated. Unfortunately, the keys for identification of mammals are limited to the generic, no specific, level. This is the more to be regretted as the "Fauna of Australia. Mammalia" certainly is a work which merits a place alongside several interesting volumes on mammals constantly produced by Australian mammalogists over the past decade.

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