

The section on snakes is valuable, and illustrated by clear line-drawings. These are lacking in the mammal chapters, where they would have been more useful than many of the photographs. The book is much too expensive at its Australian price.

W. P. C.

**MARSUPIALS OF AUSTRALIA.** By BASIL MARLOW. Jacaranda Press, Brisbane. 13s. 6d. (Aus.).

This is a well thought-out and valuable pocket guide to the Australian marsupials. So much information is packed into the terse text and numerous line-drawings and maps, that anyone will be able to criticize points of detail. In general, the information is accurate and where it is not, this is because the facts simply are not known.

A second edition could be improved by giving more advice on how to identify Australian rodents, for the amateur naturalist would have difficulty in deciding whether or not he was dealing with a small marsupial. Also, drawing an unbroken line around a suspected distribution is apt to give the impression that the range is exactly known, and deleting this would convey a better idea of just how hazy our knowledge of the range of many species is. This is a book to be carried in the pocket, and the binding should be stronger in order to withstand the rigours of the bush.

Quite apart from its usefulness within Australia, this book is highly recommended to all who would like to have the main facts about marsupials ready to hand.

W. P. C.

**THE NATURE OF THE BEAST.** By T. MURRAY SMITH. Jarrolds, London. 25s.

Anyone who has spent—as the author has—forty years among the wild creatures of Africa will have many a strange tale to tell, and these first-hand observations of a diversity of aspects of animal behaviour make most interesting and enjoyable reading. Murray Smith would like, as Wordsworth once wrote, to regard his wild animal acquaintances as “unoffending creatures whom he loves”, but in the light of long and sometimes painful experience rather does he infer that there are those which are “brute beasts that have no understanding”. He admits the necessity for the organized control of certain destructive and dangerous species in the interests of the indigenous population, albeit he is reluctant to engage in any type of operation entailing large-scale systematic slaughter, which he finds particularly repugnant even when in the best interests of humanity. It is not everyone who will agree with him, despite its evil reputation, that the buffalo is “wantonly vicious” and a “natural assassin”, for what are popularly and graphically styled “unprovoked” attacks are almost certainly the aftermath of previous provocation. There are delightful anecdotes of the Kenya administrative officer who regularly rode a giraffe or ostrich when on tour, and who kept as another pet a female chimpanzee of more than ordinary intelligence. His testimony to his devoted staff—especially Manda of the Wa’ Kamba—is what one would expect from anyone who knew the African as he did; moreover the wonderful loyalty of this particular henchman typifies a trait so characteristic of the unspoilt African and which commands our admiration and respect.

Murray Smith has witnessed many changes—often not for the better—in