

### Book review

B.J. SMITH, 1992. Non-marine Mollusca. In: W.W.K. Houston, ed., Zoological catalogue of Australia, Vol. 8. Australian Government Publishing Service, GPO Box 84, Canberra ACT 2601: i-xi, 1-399, 1 map. Price hardback Austr. \$ 49.95 (= c. f 65,00).

Our colleague Brian Smith, formerly of the Museum of Victoria, has pulled off a tour de force by producing a detailed catalogue of the non-marine molluscs of Australia (including some outlying islands groups such as Lord Howe, Norfolk, Christmas, Macquarie Is., etc.). The volume deals with 57 families, 400 genera and more than 1,000 species, but the author states on p. 1 that "about 30-40% of the non-marine fauna remains to be described"; this implies that Smith recognizes a maximum of 1,300-1,400 species in the area. This supplies valuable data in the context of modern conservation-oriented biodiversity studies. A book that starts with supplying such important and interesting details, even on its first page, is promising indeed.

It is a sad fact that a number of Australian snails are aliens; more than 40 species in 18 families of the pulmonates have been imported since the arrival of the white man. Many are pest species in agriculture and horticulture. Fortunately, Smith treats them all.

The mollusc catalogue follows the format of the earlier volumes (1983-1989, seven volumes on mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and various groups of chelicerates and insects). The government of Australia is to be congratulated on this series. Many a European country would be envious of, and many a scientist in that area would wish to possess, such thorough catalogues. These catalogues contain complete lists of species with their synonymy, bibliographic references, whereabouts of the type material, etc., all arranged in alphabetical order. In addition, there are details about distribution and ecology. This catalogue is obviously based on years of research and also on simply hard and sometimes dull work—tracing type material must have been traumatic at times. Smith has gone to great lengths to try to trace the types of the imported species as well. Data are conveniently arranged in clear type in two columns. The systematic part (313 pp.) is preceded by an editorial preface and an introduction. The book concludes with three appendices (abbreviations and symbols, museum acronyms, and, most important, a list of "Taxonomic decisions made in this work") as well as a taxonomic index of slightly less than 70 pp.

Brian Smith has supplied the first complete, critical and detailed catalogue of the Australian non-marine Mollusca. In doing so, he has built himself a monument and he now deserves a place among the great of the history of Australian non-marine malacology. He, indeed, is a worthy successor to Cox, Iredale, Burch and Solem. Although Smith modestly claims not to have composed "the definitive statement on the status of the fauna" and merely considers it "another step in the documentation of the Australian fauna", the work under discussion is the most thorough and up-to-date critical compilation of Australian non-marine molluscs. Of course, the fauna is so large and diverse, that many problems remain. Smith has enumerated those under the heading "incertae sedis" at the end of the families, so that the picture is complete.

It would be priggish to find fault with this monumental treatise. Typographically, it is beautifully presented; as far as I can judge, the computer has only once erred (p. 247, middle of right hand column), in producing more space between words than necessary. There are some spelling mistakes, mainly in foreign language quotations. I cannot understand why the author consistently gives the place of publication of Zilch's basic treatise (not 1959, but 1959-1960) as 'Berlin-Zehlendorf'. The half dozen copies I have consulted have all been published in Berlin-Nikolassee. Personally I would have used Cochlicopidae for Cionellidae and *Cochlicopa* for *Cionella*, but this is a matter of taste; there exists no official nomenclatorial decision on this problem, although in Europe (where the species came from), the former names seem to find favour generally. Also, an alphabetical order of the genera and species is far from ideal; but, who am I to suggest a better system at present?

Let me conclude by unreservedly recommending purchase of this most valuable addition to the malacological standard works of the world. Summary works on the non-marine molluscs of countries outside Europe and North America are all too rare nowadays; moreover, Smith's book is available for an unusually moderate price. Author and publisher have reason to be proud of this great treatise, a landmark in Australian malacology.