

BOOK REVIEWS

Aquatic plants of Australia. A guide to the identification of the aquatic ferns and flowering plants of Australia, both native and naturalized. Helen I. Aston. Published by Melbourne University Press, 6 September, 1973.— xv, 368 pp., 138 fig., 2 maps. Recommended price: \$21.

Aquatic plants of Australia, the product of many years of painstaking work, is one of the few professionally written thematic studies on Australian plants with a taxonomic bias and it has quickly become an indispensable reference for both professional and amateur botanists.

The author opens up her study with an introduction which briefly discusses the features of an aquatic plant and the climate and physiography of Australia. She follows this with remarks on how to use her book and includes an illustrated glossary. The whole of the main text, excepting for the treatment of *Characeae* (algae) and *Ricciaceae* (hepatics) is devoted to ferns and fern allies, monocotyledons and dicotyledons. Within each of these three major groups, species are arranged alphabetically according to family and then genus. Where appropriate, keys to genera and species are provided and the leads of each couplet in the keys are clear and concise. Although a key to the families of monocotyledons and dicotyledons would have been useful, its absence does not seriously detract from the book.

Nearly half of the 222 species detailed occur in Victoria and each of these is carefully circumscribed with the greatest emphasis on the Victorian representatives. Only the least known and imperfectly understood species are described briefly. Habitat notes and general distribution data are included for most species and dot-maps added for all but a few Victorian aquatic plants. The large number of very fine line drawings prepared by the author (and a few reproduced from other texts) substantially increase the value of this book and the author is to be commended for keeping her illustrations free from excessive shading.

Appendices detailing the importance of the Water Hyacinth and its history as a serious weed in Australia, a list of sea-grasses and a distribution chart followed by an extensive bibliography and an index close this book.

The typography throughout is fresh and crisp and the format is pleasing. The author maintains an excellent balance between the text and appropriately placed illustrative material and the running headings lend further facility to its use.

Undoubtedly *Aquatic plants of Australia* is a must for everyone who has an absorbing interest in the Australian flora and in aquatic plants in particular.

—A. B. COURT