

## BOOK REVIEW

### The Lyrebird — a Natural History

By Pauline Reilly. Published by NSW University Press, Sydney. RRP \$14.95

*Reviewed by L. E. Wall*

This book is the latest in the Australian Natural History Series. It contains a good selection of photographs in black-and-white and in colour together with a number of diagrams and sketches of feathers and claws, a list of references from the literature, and an index, totalling 92 pages.

The series is intended for students and biologists at both secondary and tertiary levels as well as for readers with a serious interest in animals and the environment.

The author was closely involved for several years with the Sherbrooke Survey Group of the Bird Observers Club making a detailed study of the lyrebird and its habits just to the east of Melbourne, and has also taken note of other areas within its range. The text is carefully divided into eleven chapters, each dealing with a specific aspect of the life history, and in general terms it would be difficult to fault the contents of their presentation, but there are a couple of minor points which are worthy of comment.

On page 5, the late Tom Tregallas has been credited with the first direct broadcast of lyrebird song on radio, which indicates a broadcast from natural surroundings. There is a story behind this. It took place on 5 July 1931 from Sherbrooke Forest and was transmitted by A.B.C. stations 3 LO and 3 AR, but R. Littlejohns, another avid photographer and recorder, heard of this plan beforehand and arranged a broadcast by a commercial radio station a week earlier, using a sound film track.

On page 13 Pauline Reilly mentions that in 1987 she made a cursory examination of the soil and leaf litter in the areas where lyrebirds had been released in Tasmania years ago but could not find any prey species which would be available to the birds. She made no comment to me at the time, and I could have told her that years previously another visitor to Mt. Field National Park had pointed out to me amphipods which are one of the main food items of these birds, and they were quite common in the leaf litter under better seasonal conditions which applied then.

On page 84 the Eastern Quoll is given the local name of Tiger Cat although its common name in Tasmania is Native Cat. On page 61 the Spotted-tailed Quoll is correctly given the common name Tiger Cat.

For anyone interested in a close study of these intriguing birds this book is to be recommended.