The Naturalized Animals of the British Isles, by **Christopher Lever.** Hutchinson, £7.60.

Animal Invaders, by **Clive Roots.** David & Charles, £5.95.

Both these books define animals as vertebrates, one dealing with the British Isles alone, the other, much more briefly, with the world. Christopher Lever provides an admirable and detailed summary of the history and present status of all currently established alien vertebrates. This means that he does not discuss animals that have been introduced in the past, even if, like the muskrat, they were very successful and only exterminated after an expensive official campaign. What remain are 22 mammals, 16 birds, six amphibians, one reptile and 14 fish, all freshwater; some of these will surprise many people. Even since 1959, when I wrote *The Ark in Our Midst* on the same subject, the Mongolian gerbil, two species of porcupine, the ring-necked parakeet, the bobwhite quail, the African clawed toad, and such curiously named fish as the guppy, the pumpkinseed, the zander and *Tilapia zillii,* have successfully established themselves. The subject is a fascinating one. Why do some species, often unwanted, succeed, while others, often badly wanted by somebody, fail? We still know so little about the ecology of most animals that it is almost impossible to predict the outcome of any experiment. Edible frogs, for instance, liberated in what is to human eyes a most suitable pond almost invariably take themselves off to another pond, sometimes some distance off.

Clive Roots paints with a broader brush, and provides a good general and factual introduction, especially to the problems that have resulted from ill-considered introductions world-wide, and sums up the pros and cons of introductions. But whatever the pros may be, the potential cons, as illustrated especially by the rabbit in Britain and Australia, should make any would-be introducer pause. Introducing an animal appears to be a practical and boy-scoutish thing to do. It is certainly much easier than stemming the disastrous loss of natural habitat, which should be the first priority of all who are seriously interested in the conservation of wildlife.

RICHARD FITTER

Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia, by **H. G. Cogger.** Reed, £22.15.

Snakes – a Natural History, by **H. W. Parker** and **A. G. C. Grandison,** British Museum, £4.95; Paperback, £2.50.

Australia's diverse and unique mammal fauna is well known, but the equally interesting herpetofauna is much less widely appreciated. It includes two species of crocodile, all but one of the world's marine turtles (the flatback turtle is confined to Australian waters), and several unusual species of freshwater turtles. The lizards range from tiny little-known geckos to giant goannas (monitor lizards) two and a half metres long. The snake fauna is characterised by the large number of poisonous species. The only amphibians are anurans (frogs and their relatives), some of which, as the photographs in Dr Cogger's book show, are extremely colourful. A surprising feature is that a number of the species included have not yet been scientifically described.

At first sight £22.15 may seem a high price, but this is a definitive handbook, comprehensive and authoritative, and unlikely to be superseded for many years. It is well illustrated – almost lavishly – with 192 colour photographs and nearly 600 in black and white, all of living animals, and most species descriptions are accompanied by distribution maps. Keys are given to all 665 species described, and the texts are concise, with the emphasis on identification.

In contrast to Dr Cogger's detailed regional fauna, aimed primarily at the specialist, *Snakes* is a review of current knowledge aimed at a much wider audience. Although described as a revised edition of Parker's original, it has in fact, been extensively rewritten and updated, and the addition of some fine line drawings and colour photographs increases its usefulness. Reasonably priced, it provides concise and readable accounts of the basic biology and classification of snakes.

JOHN A. BURTON