

### REVIEW

A.W. DOCKRILL: *Australian Indigenous Orchids; The epiphytes, the tropical terrestrial species*. Volume I. 2nd Ed. Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton, NSW, Australia. 1992. 524 + xlv pp., line drawings, 65 colour plates. ISBN 0-949324-44-2. Price AUD\$ 78, plus postage.

The first edition of this work appeared in a single volume in 1969. Now, about a quarter of a century later, so many additional species had to be included, that two volumes are needed. Most of the additions are new species described since 1969, partly as a result of the splitting tendencies of some recent Australian botanists, of which Dockrill is highly critical. Each species is described in detail and illustrated with a full-page line drawing. While perhaps not of professional quality, the drawings are sufficiently clear and accurate to make the task of identifying almost any tropical Australian orchid a light one. In addition, all genera and species are keyed out.

The distribution within Australia is usually given in considerable detail, but for those without an encyclopedic knowledge of Australian topography it is often difficult to get an idea of the area concerned. A few maps, and some degree of standardization would have been helpful.

As a guide to the identification of tropical Australian orchids (temperate terrestrials, perhaps the most 'typically Australian' orchids, are not treated) this work is excellent. However, those who are interested in the biology of these plants, will not find much information here. The author must have an extensive field knowledge, yet in most cases we learn little more than that a certain species is an epiphyte in upland rain forest, for instance. Which species are commonly found together, what kind of trees are preferred, which part of the tree is colonized, what is known or not known about the pollination biology, these and similar questions remain unanswered.

The book is well produced, printed on good-quality paper and provided with a very good index. The fine colour plates are scattered more or less randomly throughout the pages; some species are depicted in volume 1 and described in volume 2, which is inconvenient.

To summarize, this is an indispensable work for those seriously interested in Australian orchids.

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