

Book Review

Atlas of Australian Resources, 2nd Series 1970. "Grasslands" by R. Milton Moore, Department of National Development \$0.75.

The Atlas of Australian Resources is Australia's national atlas consisting of thirty coloured map sheets (28½ by 29½ inches) each accompanied by a booklet commentary. The maps show the geographic distribution of physical resources, industries, population and services. The series was first issued between 1952 and 1960. A second series, commencing in 1962, is providing revised editions of many of the maps and replacing others with new material.

"Grasslands" is one such new subject in the series. Under the able authorship of Dr. Milton Moore it presents us with a concise account of the natural and induced grasslands of Australia. Perhaps there is no better qualified author in Australia to present this subject, and certainly the time is ripe for such a document.

The commentary has been prepared largely from Dr. Moore's recent book "Australian Grasslands" (A.N.U. Press, 1970). The account begins by a redefinition of Australian grassland terms which does little to clarify or improve existing terminology. Grazing Land is a term here restricted to native pastures (i.e. grasslands containing only indigenous herbaceous species). Pasture is used for grasslands either entirely or partly composed of exotic pasture species.

The task of presenting, discussing and relating the many types of grassland, native, naturalized and exotic, has been well executed. They have been selectively illustrated by 8 excellent black and white photographs which are mostly new. The maps are excellent though the colours are a little pale.

There are 10 "Grazing Land" divisions which are delineated on the top left hand map of the four comprising the sheet. Four additional categories of low grazing value are also included. However, the discussion of the Brigalow Grazing Lands leads to some confusion because it is not clear whether reference is being made to uncleared brigalow or cleared but unsown brigalow.

There are six basic types of "Pastures". These are grasslands containing a significant or entire component of introduced pasture species. The right hand top map delineates these types, actual and potential. From the lower two maps "Acreage of Grassland Fertilized" (L) and "Acreage of Pasture" (with percentage change) (R) it is possible to separate the present from the potential pasture development in the Pastures map. It is obvious that most of the northern pasture areas are potential rather than actual. It is also interesting that the areas of greatest yearly percentage change are in Queensland and the eastern fringe of the pasture belt in Western Australia. This can be attributed largely to the recent availability of new pasture species. In Queensland they are buffel grass, green panic, Townsville stylo and Siratro, in Western Australia it is rose clover with new strains of subterranean clover.

The bulk of Australia's pastoral production comes from the areas of consolidated pasture development which is well displayed on the "Livestock" map sheet in the same atlas. With the present winds of economic change blowing through the pastoral industry, our increasing environmental awareness, the impact of recreational requirements of our increasingly urban population, and ever expanding scientific horizons, we stand on the threshold of a new era in land use and development. This map sheet and its commentary together with "Australian Grasslands" are invaluable reference points.

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