CHAPTER 9

The Land of the Living Fossils

Animals in Travelogues for Dutch-Australian Emigrants, 1950-1970

Ton van Kalmthout

Abstract

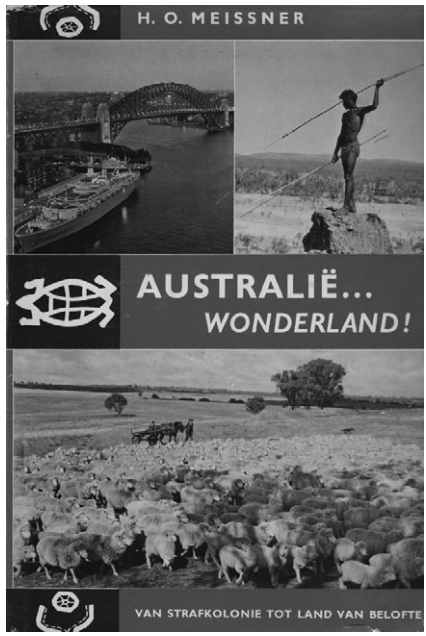
Dutch emigrants who moved to Australia after the Second World War were confronted with an exceptional animal world, if only in emigration literature, including travel reports. This article discusses to which Australian animals such reports paid most attention, and how and why they did so. On the one hand, it concerns animals the emigrants already knew from the Netherlands, albeit found in Australia in numbers unfamiliar to them. On the other, various previously unknown native mammals and birds are mentioned, all of which rendered it an exciting and exotic country. It is remarkable that indigenous Aborigines were often mentioned in the same breath as the native fauna. With their representation of people and animals, the travelogues made Australia an attractive wonderland for emigrants.

Keywords: Travelogues, Dutch-Australian emigrants, post-war emigration, Australia, livestock, wildlife

In its 1949 brochure *Australië: Een beschrijving van land en volk ten dienste van emigranten* (Australia: A description of the land and people at the service of emigrants), the governmental Netherlands Emigration Foundation states:

> The plant and animal world of Australia is most remarkable. Even to such an extent that botanists and zoologists often categorise the world in an Australian and a non-Australian one. On the one hand, the animals, trees and plants found in other parts of the world do not exist in Australia; on the other hand, there are species which elsewhere in the world are only found in fossilised form, in layers of the earth of hundreds or thousands of centuries old. Therefore, Australia has sometimes been referred to as 'the land of the living fossils'.[1]

In the coming decades, more and more Dutch people would be confronted with this exceptional plant and animal world. After the crisis and war years of the 1930s and 1940s, in the period 1950-1970, motivated by the fear of unemployment, war, and food shortages, a massive influx of emigrants from the Netherlands (as well as from



Front cover of H.O. Meissner, *Australië... wonderland! Van strafkolonie tot land van belofte* (1968). The jacket features a passenger ship docked in Sydney Harbour, an indigenous hunter, and a flock of sheep. Private collection.

other European countries) took place. Additionally, following Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945, many of the Dutch men and women living in the former Dutch colony were also looking for a safe haven – one that they did not envision in the battered Netherlands. At the same time, the Netherlands experienced a population explosion, causing the Dutch government to share the public's concerns. As a result, the government reached agreements with various countries willing to take on Dutch settlers, including Australia, which for military and economic reasons was in great need of substantial population growth.[2] More than 140,000 Dutch citizens moved to Australia to start a new life in the 1950s and 1960s.[3]

The flow of emigrants was accompanied by a number of publications for, about, and by emigrants. These texts, in which the government regularly had a hand with assignments for writing books, subsidies to finance them, and governmental prefaces, encouraged people to leave, or sometimes specifically wanted to prevent this. They provided information about the emigration trajectory itself and the country of destination and legitimised settlement on the other side of the world. Such literature was intended for emigrants and those considering doing so, but it was also aimed at other interested parties such as family members left behind, information officers, and officials. The readership could make use of a diverse corpus of texts for adults and young people, including poetry, short stories and novels, collections of printed letters and autobiographies, manuals, guides and propaganda material, as well as geographical descriptions and travel stories.[4] From this plethora of potential sources, I focus on the final genre, which in itself also encompasses a diversity of text types[5] and, similar to other emigration literature, was read both in its original form and in translation.[6]

Travelogues almost always exhibit an interweaving of truth and fiction, and in some instances it is this latter aspect that gains the upper hand.[7] In this chapter,

however, I exclude wholly or partly fictional travel stories, limiting myself to those that conform with John Zilcosky's conception of travel writing: 'a narrated account of a voyage (generally told in the first person) based on "actual travels undertaken"'.[8] More specifically, I base my analysis on a number of books published in the 1950s and 1960s. Two were written by Dutch journalists Huib Koemans (1910-1999) and Mathieu Smedts (1913-1996).[9] Four others are translations of travel reports by the British writer Colin MacInnes (1914-1976), the German writer Hans Otto Meissner (1909-1992), and their Australian colleagues Paul McGuire (1903-1978) and Bill Beatty (1902-1972) respectively.[10] Where relevant, I also refer to other contemporary emigration literature. In the travelogues mentioned, so-called 'vertical travelling' is often described, which means, in the words of Alasdair Pettinger, a 'temporary dwelling in a location for a period of time where the traveler begins to travel down into the particulars of place either in space (botany, studies of micro-climate, exhaustive exploration of local landscape) or in time (local history, archaeology, folklore)'.[11] Indeed, this is how such literature almost always reflects on Australia's flora and fauna – the natural world of a country that in its sheer size forms a continent of its own and for that reason alone necessitates travel to reach all its quarters. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, it had functioned as a penal colony for British convicts and was further colonised. Nevertheless, Australia was still sparsely populated and considered largely uncultivated by settlers in the first decades after the Second World War.

In this chapter, I analyse the representation of Australian faunae in travel writing from the post-war period. Which species are discussed, what image of them is presented to the reader, and what may have been its intended effect? As I will show, initially two groups can be distinguished: those introduced to Australia by Europeans – sheep, cattle, rabbits, and horses – and those indigenous to the continent. An important note here is that I do not review all the species identified by travel writers, but rather focus on those that were given the most prominence. For example, they barely discussed the huge number of insects, such as ants, flies, and cicadas, even though they thrive in the often warm climate and were therefore a frequent horror for newcomers.

Sheep and cattle, rabbits and horses

Both in Australia and the Netherlands, emigration authorities and information officers tried to align themselves with the perceptions and preferences of those interested in emigration. At least initially, this was most often someone with an agricultural background. Thus, a substantial part of the information presented in emigration literature regarding Australian faunae deals with sheep and cattle,

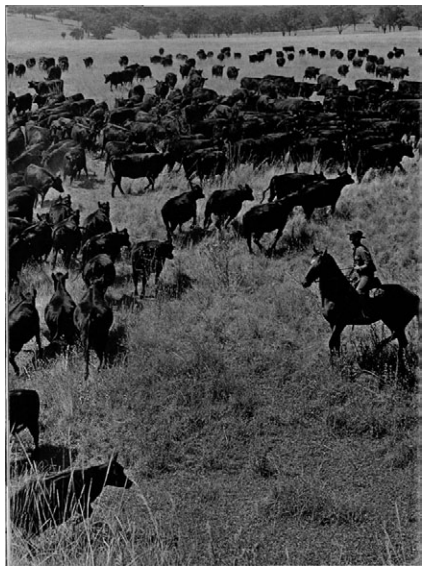
primarily those kept for dairy, meat, and wool production, but also, as in the Netherlands, as a source of leather and other animal products. However, livestock farming was conducted on a scale that was difficult for the Dutch to imagine. McGuire notes that, already in 1938, there were 13 million cattle and 111 million sheep in Australia.[12] Around 1950, the country was responsible for a quarter of the world's wool production which, alongside dairy and meat production, was one of its main exports.

Australian livestock was not only farmed in the fertile coastal areas, but also in the arid, inhospitable outback, where only salt bushes and a tough grass called spinifex grew. McGuire expresses great concern about the massive overgrazing of such areas. He notes that, in such instances, the vegetation no longer provides stability to the sandy soil on which it grew and, as a result, erosion occurs. The land can no longer support new plants, and thus becomes subject to desertification.[13] However, at that time, the problem does not seem to have been particularly acute. Australian sheep and cattle farmers had access to vast expanses of grassland – often thousands of hectares per farm upon which huge herds numbering hundreds of cattle, and thousands of sheep, were grazed. For shearing or slaughter, the animals were driven to the coastal areas by modern-day cowboys on horseback assisted by herding dogs – an image that to this day characterises Australia.

Another animal familiar to most Dutch migrants would have been rabbits. However, these too were – and still are – found in vast numbers in Australia. Unlike cattle and sheep, they are invariably presented in emigration literature as vermin – difficult to exterminate and impossible to control with fences. McGuire writes:

> During the periods of drought, the rabbits die by the millions and tens of millions at a time. In their frenzied flight to the food and water they sometimes lie against the fences in incredible masses, thus forming a bridge with their dead bodies for the survivors. At the end of a drought period, there are no rabbits anymore in the affected area. But when it rains again, the survivors reappear, producing millions of offspring in a single season.[14]

Introduced to Australia around 1800 alongside cattle and sheep, rabbits had multiplied to an estimated one billion by the Second World War. In such numbers they caused significant damage to the crops needed for farming and livestock. If only this could be prevented, it was suggested, the Australian sheep population could be twice as large. Hence, no means were spared to exterminate the animals, not only with traditional pesticides, but also via the construction of extensive physical barriers. Indeed, to this end, a 1,800 kilometre long, so-called 'rabbit proof fence', more than one meter high and made of iron wire was erected in Western Australia. The fence cut through forests, farmlands, gold fields, and deserts.



'On a cattle range in New South Wales: a herd grazes under the supervision of a drover. Endless, undulating plains, innumerable cows. This is one of the most fertile pasturelands in all of Australia.'[15] Photograph: David Moore, in: Colin MacInnes & the editors of LIFE, *Australië en Nieuw-Zeeland* (1965), p. 36. Private collection.

Mathieu Smedts learnt of the fence from the then seventy-year-old migrant Peer Meulemans from Antwerp who formerly earned a living, amongst other things, by hunting rabbits. Meulemans was also responsible for the maintenance of 500 kilometres of the fence in the sweltering north – a 'Chinese wall' sometimes undermined by the water from a cloudburst, then again by the theft of the wire by native 'savages'. Moreover, Meulemans affirmed, if rabbit corpses piled up against it, it was no longer effective.[16] However, an alternative to pesticide was employed from 1950 onwards: Myxomatosis, a virus deliberately spread with the help of mosquitos lethal only to rabbits. Smedts notes that 300 million rabbits have died in the past five years. 'The Australian is struggling to understand European outrage over the rabbit disease', he knows, 'Myxomatosis is the hope for his country'. Indeed, people were already talking 'about the time when Australia would have to be evacuated and left to the rabbits'.[17] How sustainable the control afforded by Myxomatosis would be, however, remained unclear at that time.

The final animal that would have been well known to Dutch emigrants – albeit one almost exclusively used for ceremonial, policing, and sporting purposes – is the horse. In Australia, horses were also found in feral herds that were hunted to prevent damage to farmlands and danger to traffic, or to tame the animals for agricultural and sporting uses. Around 1950, Australia had a successful horse breeding industry that was used to provide riding and work horses for export – a line of business that was already declining due to the mechanisation of agriculture. In addition, albeit on a smaller scale, the country also produced polo and racehorses. It had about 1.5 million horses at the time.[18] Traditionally, oxen were also used for the transport of people and goods, as well as camels in desert areas, such as the Northern Territory. Indeed, those working in such barren and vast regions, such

as Peer Meulemans, also travelled by camel.[19] For some time after the war, the horse remained a common means of transport in the countryside, also for children. McGuire reports in 1950: 'Apart from urban children, there are not many Australian children who cannot ride a horse. They grow up with it, and, on the long distances they have to travel to and from school, the horse is an indispensable means of transport.'[20]

In emigration literature, the horse as a mode of transport was portrayed significantly more often than other means such as cars. However, most often, migrants learnt of the use of horses in connection with horse racing – in Australia considered the national sport par excellence. The annual Melbourne Cup, held on the first Tuesday of November, was (and remains) a national holiday. 'Thousands come to Melbourne by train, by plane, by car, from a thousand, three thousand kilometres away', says Smedts: 'For a week, the guests stay to feast. The ladies have been saving for months for new hats and dresses which are described in great detail in the newspapers.' Even the apparent lack of hotel space was not a problem: 'whole tent camps are rising up wherever there is room during that week'.[21] Those who could not attend in person would be glued to the radio, whilst fanatical betting took place at the bookmakers. Smedts also illustrates the Australian love for racing with a story about a prized animal, also famous in New Zealand, Phar Lap (1926-1932):

> In their sermons, bishops spoke of Phar Lap's courage and modesty. Businessmen, wanting to get something done from their competitors, sent them tickets for the races in which it took part. Newspapers, who did not know what to do in the [so-called] silly season, told its life for the thousandth time, sure that it would be read.

When the animal's life came to an untimely end due to poisoning after a victory in America, the Australian press reported it 'as the event of the century', Smedts writes: 'When his corpse arrived in Sydney, the factories and offices were shut down and the whole city went out to pay Phar Lap its last respects. Immigrants are still taken to the museum by their Australian friends, where his remains attract numerous visitors.'[22]

However famous a racehorse like Phar Lap may have been, for Dutch emigrants, other animals they knew from Europe must have appealed more to the imagination. As previously mentioned, the travel writers of the time promised that they would find such animals in the country of destination in numbers unimaginable in the country of origin. In addition, their stories presented these animals as living in vast, often rugged areas, for which there was no Dutch equivalent. This expansive portrayal would have made Australia seem an adventurous country, not only in the eyes of farmers, but also in those of others. This effect was further enhanced by descriptions of indigenous animals.

Caricatures of ordinary animals

Against a background of acacia branches, the Australian coat of arms shows a kangaroo and an emu, flanking a shield with seals of the six states of the Commonwealth of Australia. Four of them also bear the image of an animal: New South Wales and Tasmania a lion (not found in Australia); South Australia a whistling shrike; and Western Australia a black swan. These two birds, together with the emu and the kangaroo, are part of the rich fauna inhabiting the country – a fauna that, as post-war emigration literature emphasises, is found hardly anywhere else. McGuire writes that Australia has 400 mammal species and about 700 bird species; however, he immediately adds that 'the 157 years of civilization has already caused some of them to die out'.[23] Travel literature mentions marsupials such as possums, wombats and echidnas, scorpions, geckos and other lizards, bellbirds, cranes, cockatoos, and parrots. Such exotic creatures clearly captured the imagination of the Dutch. Indeed, Smedts devotes a separate chapter to the 'miraculous animals of Australia', miraculous because of their peculiar appearance and behaviour: 'Nature has played a trick on the Australian animals. They are caricatures of ordinary animals.'[24]

The kangaroo, in all its many forms – e.g., the giant kangaroo, the wallaby, and the tree kangaroo – is, in both word and image, by far the most frequent to appear in travel literature aimed at migrants. To the Dutch, this strangely proportioned herd animal symbolises Australia like no other. However, as MacInnes warns his

Original drawing of Australia's Coat of Arms, 1912. Collection National Archives of Australia/Wikimedia Commons.

readers: 'Up close, the kangaroo is not such a friendly animal as one might think when seen jumping in the distance like a ballet dancer. It is very similar to a squirrel, and if it is not kindly disposed to you it can give you a hard kick with its hind legs.'[25] Koemans agrees that the kangaroo 'is not by any means the kind soul it seems to be': 'When he gets angry, he sits on his tail and, with his strong hind legs, easily and effectively tears open his victim from top to bottom.'[26] Smedts adds that the kangaroos themselves are threatened by hunting and motor traffic, although apparently, they are also extremely tough animals. After one was hit by a car, Smedts states, it seemed unconscious. The driver put the animal upright and jokingly dressed it with his jacket to take a picture of it. However, the animal regained consciousness and ran away, carrying the driver's wallet in its inside pocket. 'That's why, at the moment, a rich kangaroo is jumping around the desert, dressed in a sports jacket.'[27]

Yet easily tamed marsupials are protected. For example, endangered koalas are, according to McGuire, 'laughable, lovely creatures, who have served as models for the teddy bears of the children'.[28] Indeed, in common with small children they cry out when they hurt themselves. Others also mention the resemblance to teddy bears, although, according to Koemans, koalas have got an extraordinary 'strange nose'. He thinks they are 'weird jokers who perform the most amazing antics in a kind of clumsy slow motion'.[29] MacInnes warns that the koala, 'no matter how lovable it looks, could scratch your eyes out with its razor-sharp claws if not treated properly'.[30] A far more dangerous animal, however, is the wolf-like dingo. Smedts records the testimony of Peer Meulemans, who was also a dingo hunter:

> He had seen them at work near Alice Springs in Central Australia. Sometimes the farmers find twenty or thirty dead sheep there, slaughtered by a single dingo. 'They are true murderers, who are not satisfied until they have slaughtered an entire herd. They maul the young calves before the eyes of the cows, which can do nothing against the sharp teeth of the beast.'[31]

One last mammal, once again protected, is invariably presented as Australia's queerest: the platypus, 'duck, otter and reptile all at once', according to Meissner, who even calls it 'the rarest creature on earth'.[32] It is an amphibian mostly living in water, and with the webbed feet and beak of a duck, McGuire explains. It appears to have hardly any chances of survival in captivity: 'A single platypus was once taken to the New York Zoo, where it survived only a few weeks; hundreds of thousands of people came to see it and most of them thought it was a joke.'[33]

Even more so than for mammals, the travel writers present Australia as a paradise for birds. Iconic of this – as seen on the Australian coat of arms – is primarily the emu. A large flightless bird, nonetheless successful on the Australian continent, McGuire describes the emu as 'a dumb bird': 'Anyone who has seen him trot along a fence or run for miles in the headlights of his car will agree.'[34] Somewhat more

prestige is attributed to the lyrebird, which folds its lyre-shaped tail over its body whilst dancing and can imitate even the most diverse sounds. Smedts: 'It has happened that people looked up convinced that a fighter jet was on the way and then noticed that a lyre bird was joking.'[35] McGuire recounts how one specimen played hide and seek with him for hours:

> That afternoon it kept flying around me. Sometimes I pressed motionless against a clammy log for twenty minutes, while it kept popping up and disappearing again. There were moments when I could have sworn he was no more than four or five meters from me, and perhaps he was. When I crept up behind his mocking sounds, he started flashing from side to side and [from] front to back. I heard it brushing through the foliage, but I never got to see it. I don't know if there was one bird or twenty in those bushes, but at least there was one. […] When dusk began to fall and the mud was knee-deep […] I gave up. The moment I turned to go back it came running out of the bushes and it began looking for worms ten feet away under a moss-covered log.[36]

Similarly, the kookaburra, whose call is reminiscent of human laughter, is thought to be at least as smart. This bird, which is considered useful, approachable, and widely loved, is also protected and regularly chooses as its permanent residence the environment of a human home. 'It knows all the people belonging to the house very precisely', Meissner writes, 'and it certainly knows more about them than many would like. For with its sensible sharp eyes he sees everything and takes pleasure in it.'[37] It is also able to catch rodents and snakes, and forcibly render them harmless.

Compared to the Netherlands, snakes are relatively common in Australia; however, due to the availability of effective serums, the danger posed by snakebites was (and indeed remains) low.[38] Nonetheless, according to some travel writers, Dutch emigrants needed to exercise caution. McGuire describes the wild Mallee, an area northwest of Melbourne, as 'an awful land, flat, without variety and practically without water, a world of sinister grey-green, left entirely to the snakes'.[39] Koemans acknowledges that he has not visited such regions, and because of the snakes he does not regret it in the least. The mere sight of a dead one made him shudder. Koemans recalls the story of a fourteen-year-old boy in Koo Wee Rup, a town southeast of Melbourne, where many Dutch people settled in the early 1950s. The boy from Veenendaal told him that 'just when it raised its head and stuck out its forked tongue', he gave a snake 'a wallop with a piece of iron wire, to which the beast had no answer'. Laconically he added: 'And oh, you so often find those things under old planks, in a stump and so on, in these first days of spring, curled up next to its hole.' Although Koemans sees this attitude as evidence of the adaptability of the Dutch, it is questionable to what extent this was the case, even more so when it came to that other reptile that lives in Australia: the crocodile.[40] Reporting on the northern

saltwater crocodile, McGuire states: 'It grows up to six meters in length and is a man-eater.'[41] Particularly alarming to the emigrant must have been Beatty's remark that Australia has 'not enough hunters to deplete the ranks of the crocodiles'.[42]

Whilst, unlike other travel book authors, Beatty also focuses on whale hunting, his contemporaries share remarkably little about the many types of fish that occur in and around Australia, even though the country is surrounded on all sides by seas and oceans. Indeed, it is certain that, after the war, sharks, swordfish, salmon, mackerel, and tuna were fished, but Beatty is the only traveller who pays particular attention to fishing, or rather, to the capture, dissection, and processing of whales at a station in Tangalooma on the east coast of Australia.[43] Against the background of the history and myths relating to Australia's whaling industry, Beatty gives a detailed and, in more ways than one, shocking description: 'A deafening explosion, and the glittering steel shaft [of the harpoon] slides through the air and lands with a dull thud deep into the bowels of the mighty body.'[44]

Not only is Beatty the only travel writer to describe the violence of whaling, he also seems to take a certain pleasure from it. Notwithstanding this, with his colleagues, he shares a fascination with Australia's unique native wildlife, whether dangerous, cuddly, or skittish. Their travel reports show all kinds of exceptional creatures, which were often threatened and at the time becoming increasingly rare. Their representation gave Australia an extravagant and fairy-tale-like quality, evoked by living relics from times long past. For their contemporaries, it was but a short step to those that had populated Australia long before the arrival of Western settlers – the Aborigines.

The old people

In travelogues intended for migrants, Aboriginal peoples occupied a special place in relation to the animal kingdom, also literally. Indeed, they were regularly associated with each other, if only by drawing attention to animal representations in Aboriginal painting. The dominant discourse cultivated by Western colonial powers regarding the indigenous population of seized territories cited stereotypical, underdeveloped, and uncivilised 'savages' who were close to animals. This perspective was also foregrounded in the colonial literature of the time.[45] Settlers derived a sense of self-confidence from that perspective and, time and again, used it to affirm their own superiority, justifying the demarcation of indigenous people as 'colonised others' and the subsequent confiscation of their livelihoods, if necessary, with violence. This colonial mode of thinking was adopted by emigration literature well into the twentieth century, including in travel accounts about Australia – itself colonised by the United Kingdom until 1901.

'When natives in Arnhem Land settle near a white settlement, they quickly develop into excellent herders as they are familiar with animals',[48] in: H.O. Meissner, *Australië... wonderland! Van strafkolonie tot land van belofte* (1968), between p. 160 and p. 161. Private collection.

Remarkably often, such texts discuss Australia's indigenous people immediately after or simultaneously with the continent's faunae. The publisher of Beatty's *Kriskras door Australië* promises that the author 'recounts very vividly the beauty of the landscape, of the varied life in nature with its plants and animals, but also of the people living there'.[46] Some authors even include indigenous peoples and native animals in the same section or chapter. For example, Koemans' chapter 'Fauna' deals with both the Australian animal world and the original human population.[47] Other authors explicitly liken Aborigines to animals, as did the eighteenth-century explorer James Cook, who saw foraging wildlife in Australia's itinerant natives.[49] Similarly, McGuire calls naked Aborigines diving at the coast for pearls 'almost amphibians',[50] and according to Koemans, other natives, with their prowess in tracking, can be used 'as human sniffer dogs'.[51]

In Australian society, Aboriginal people formed a marginalised group in the decades after the Second World War, but in the interior they were sometimes used for herding livestock or for work on a farm, as they were supposed to be good with animals.[52] The image of the Aborigine, threatening the life of the white man, as can be seen in adventure novels of those days,[53] is not an issue in the travel literature discussed here. Rather, the writers cited in this chapter draw attention to the often hostile and condescending treatment of Aborigines, which is only slowly changing to the adoption of a more respectful approach. According to Koemans, it goes without saying that the study of the way of life of indigenous peoples is very worthwhile.[54] Some ten years later, MacInnes recalls that Australian anthropologists are now researching the 'primitive civilisation' of those 'prehistoric people' and the Stone Age life they lead, 'more or less as our own ancestors must have done tens of thousands of years ago'.[55] Tellingly enough, McGuire still finds it necessary to ensure that the Aborigine, 'however far he may be from our world and from our ways of thinking, is unreservedly a human being'.[56] Nonetheless, Aboriginal people remained in the eyes of the travel writers, like many Australian animals, 'living fossils'.

Conclusion

Before returning to the question which animals were represented in travel stories for Dutch-Australian emigrants, and how and why this happened, it makes sense to consider to what extent their authors and readers actually came into contact with Australia's animal world. Outside the urban environment, they undoubtedly found sheep, cattle, horses, and rabbits, whilst most of the native fauna, not least due to its often protected status, seemed easier to encounter in writing. 'The Dutchman who goes to Australia to settle in one of the big cities, or even in the more densely populated agricultural areas not too far from the coast, will probably not find many of the animals we mentioned on his daily walks', the Netherlands Emigration Foundation expected in 1949: 'Many a 20th-century Sydney resident would not have even seen a kangaroo or koala, other than in Taronga Park, Sydney's zoo, or Koala Park, way outside the city, where the otherwise extinct animal lives in freedom alongside other Australian animals.'[57]

McGuire and Meissner would confirm this in subsequent decades.[58] The latter not only reports on a visit to the aforementioned Koala Park, he also tells about the Healesville reserve in the Dandanong Mountains northeast of Melbourne, an imposing landscape with eucalyptus trees of 'unlikely' height. Behind a kilometre-long and three-metre-high fence lies 'an animal paradise such as none can be found in our own continent':

> Within this enclosure the animal world lives perfectly safe from the dangers of freedom and has become so accustomed to the many visitors that it no longer has any fear of humans. […] Wherever one looks, one sees contented animals without any shyness or fear. They have only got to know people from their best side and, as their behaviour proves, consider it excellent that these too belong to their natural environment.[59]

'Taronga Park is more than just a zoo. Although small, it is wonderfully situated and is rightly acclaimed for its wonderful natural habitats for both humans and animals. It is located right opposite Sydney Harbour. A little girl makes friends with a wallaby at the Children's Zoo',[60] in: Paul McGuire, *Zó is Australië. Land en volk* (1950), opposite p. 128. Private collection.

The latter remains to be seen, of course. It is true that the animals, which had become tame, can be petted and fed in the park, but Meissner also sees that, as a result, it is extremely popular amongst the residents of Melbourne who, especially on weekends, go there with whole families to spend a few days. They can use tables and benches, play areas and shelters, and there are restaurants and picnic areas with fireplaces and free firewood for those who want to prepare their own meals. Meissner is very pleased with it, as well as with the visitors' exemplary manners: 'Healesville is truly a paradise, where even the young people behave like angels.'[61] In any case, it is much more cultivated than Flinders Chase, a wildlife sanctuary described by Beatty that covers about a third of Kangaroo Island off the coast of Adelaide. The sanctuary is home to both more common and rare species such as the koala, the platypus, the Cape Barren goose, the Mallee fowl, and the bush turkey. Visitors to the sanctuary can observe the various animals that live there, but there is no question of any physical approach, and the shyer animals are usually absent as 'a few remote places in the forest only reveal their secrets to the toughest trappers'.[62]

In practice, Beatty, Meissner, and McGuire seem to suggest, there was little chance that Dutch migrants would encounter Australia's special faunae in the wild. Yet, as this chapter has shown, the Dutch-Australian travel literature of the time paid it significant attention and did so for various reasons. Even if the travel writers discussed had not seen the animals personally, they could, at the very least, show how well informed they were. Emigrants from the Netherlands and other people involved in their emigration were thus able to learn much about the Australian animal world. On the one hand, it concerns animals they knew already from the Netherlands, but the scale and environment in which they might encounter them in Australia made them impressive. On the other hand, it involves animals virtually unknown to the Dutch and, historically, only found in Australia. The description of both groups of animals, well known and lesser known, contributed significantly to the portrayal of Australia with its eccentric, exotic, or idyllic features – a land of limitless possibilities, a fascinating wonderland, tempting for emigrants.

This image surely played a role in the way in which Dutch emigration literature functioned after the Second World War. It was not just about entertainment. The travel texts discussed above contributed not only to the dissemination of information that prepared the Dutch for what they could expect in Australia, but also to promotional campaigns aimed at persuading potential emigrants to settle there (and perhaps the true reason the nuisance from insects was usually kept out of sight).[63] The idea of ample opportunities for large-scale livestock farming appealed to farmers with too little career prospects in the Netherlands, whilst the Arcadian and exciting features with which the travel stories characterised much of Australia's faunae must also have been inviting, especially for those with an adventurous spirit. However, by mentioning this animal world in the same breath

as the Aboriginal population, travel writers *en passant* seized the opportunity to present the Westerner as inherently more civilised. This undoubtedly justified – albeit not in so many words – that the habitat of the Aborigines was 'cultivated', just like that of the native animals.[64]

Notes

1 Stichting Landverhuizing Nederland, *Australië*, 27: 'De planten- en dierenwereld van Australië is hoogst merkwaardig. Zozeer zelfs, dat plant- en dierkundigen dikwijls de fauna en flora van de wereld plegen in te delen in een Australische en een niet-Australische. Enerzijds bestaan in Australië niet de dieren, bomen en planten die men in de andere werelddelen aantreft, anderzijds bestaan er juist soorten die men overigens in de wereld slechts in versteende vorm in aardlagen van honderden of duizenden eeuwen oud vindt. Men heeft Australië dan ook wel eens "het land der levende fossielen" genoemd.'

2 On post-war emigration from the Netherlands to Australia and the related government policy, see: Obdeijn & Schrover, *Komen en gaan*, esp. section 5.5; Van Faassen, *Polder en emigratie*, esp. 162-168.

3 This number is based on the overviews 'Emigratie naar enige landen van bestemming 1945-1996' (Emigration to some countries of destination 1945-1996) and 'Buitenlandse migratie van Nederlanders met de specifieke emigratielanden naar geslacht 1948-1997' (Foreign migration of Dutch people with the specific emigration countries by gender 1948-1997), which Statistics Netherlands (CBS) made available to me.

4 See Van Kalmthout, 'At the Edge of the World and Other Stories'.

5 See Holland & Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, 8-9; Zilcosky, 'Writing Travel', 7.

6 Cf. Ní Loinsigh, 'Translation', 259.

7 Lean, Staiff & Waterton, 'Reimagining Travel and Imagination', 15; Zilcosky, 'Writing Travel', 8.

8 Zilcosky, 'Writing Travel', 7.

9 Koemans, *Australië op het eerste gezicht… en… bij nader inzien* (Australia at first glance… and… on second thought); Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland* (Australia new fatherland). On both books and the preceding voyage, see: Van Kalmthout, 'At the Edge of the World and Other Stories', 301-302.

10 MacInnes & the editors of LIFE, *Australië en Nieuw-Zeeland*; Meissner, *Australië… wonderland! Van strafkolonie tot land van belofte* (Australia… wonderland! From penal colony to promised land); McGuire, *Zó is Australië: Land en volk* (That's Australia: Country and people); Beatty, *Kriskras door Australië* (Crisscross through Australia).

11 Pettinger, 'Vertical Travel', 277.

12 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 329.

13 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 318-324.

14 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 324: 'Tijdens de perioden van droogte sterven de konijnen met millioenen en tientallen millioenen tegelijk. Bij hun waanzinnige vlucht naar het voedsel en het water liggen ze soms in ongelofelijke massa's tegen de omheiningen op, en vormen zodoende met hun dode lichamen een brug voor de overlevenden. Aan het eind van een droogteperiode is er in het getroffen gebied geen konijn meer te bekennen. Maar als het weer gaat regenen, komen de overlevenden weer tevoorschijn, die in één seizoen millioenen nakomelingen voortbrengen.'

15 'Op een veefokkerij in Nieuw-Zuid-Wales: een kudde graast onder toezicht van een veeknecht. Eindeloze, golvende vlakten, ontelbare koeien. Dit is een der vruchtbaarste weidelanden van heel Australië.'

16 Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 50-51.

[17] Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 35-37. Quotes on p. 36: 'Chinese Muur'; 'wilden'; 'De Australiër heeft moeite om de Europese ontsteltenis over de konijnenziekte te begrijpen'; 'Myxomatose is de hoop voor zijn land'; 'over de tijd, dat men Australië zou moeten ontruimen om het over te laten aan de konijnen'.

[18] Van der Laan, *Australië, land van vele mogelijkheden*, 83.

[19] See Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 52-53. In the course of time, however, use of the animals waned in favour of trucks. As late as 1990, the Dutch travel story writer Cees Nooteboom noticed yellow road signs in the MacDonnell Mountains in the Northern Territory warning against crossing camels, but in this case it presumably involved feral camel herds. See Nooteboom, *Australië*, 46.

[20] McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, caption to image opposite p. 145: 'Er zijn, afgezien van de stadskinderen, niet veel Australische kinderen die geen paard kunnen rijden. Ze groeien er mee op en op de lange afstanden die zij af moeten leggen van en naar school, is het paard een onmisbare vervoersgelegenheid.'

[21] Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 105-106: 'Per trein, per vliegtuig, per auto komen duizenden naar Melbourne, duizend, drieduizend kilometer ver'; 'Een week lang blijven de gasten van buiten om feest te vieren. De dames hebben maandenlang gespaard voor nieuwe hoeden en jurken, die in de kranten tot in de kleinste finesses worden beschreven'; 'hele tentenkampen rijzen op, overal waar er ruimte is in die week'.

[22] Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 104-105: 'Bisschoppen spraken in hun preken over de moed en de bescheidenheid van Phar Lap. Zakenlieden, die van hun concurrenten iets gedaan wilden krijgen, zonden hun kaartjes voor de rennen, waaraan hij deelnam. Kranten, die in de komkommertijd geen raad wisten, vertelden voor de duizendste keer zijn leven, zeker, dat het gelezen zou worden'; 'als de gebeurtenis van de eeuw'; 'Toen zijn lijk in Sydney aankwam, lagen de fabrieken en kantoren stil en de hele stad liep uit om Phar Lap de laatste eer te bewijzen. Nog altijd worden de immigranten door hun Australische vrienden meegenomen naar het museum, waar zijn stoffelijk overschot steeds talloze bezoekers trekt.'

[23] McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, caption opposite p. 321: 'de 157 jaar van civilisatie heeft er voor gezorgd, dat sommige daarvan al aardig beginnen uit te sterven'.

[24] Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 156-157: 'De wonderlijke dieren van Australië'; 'De natuur heeft de Australische dieren een poets gebakken. Zij zijn caricaturen van de gewone dieren.'

[25] MacInnes, *Australië en Nieuw-Zeeland*, 11-12: 'Van nabij blijkt de kangoeroe niet zo'n vriendelijk dier als men zou denken wanneer men hem in de verte als een balletdanser ziet springen. Hij lijkt veel op een eekhoorn, en als hij u niet vriendelijk gezind is kan hij met zijn achterpoten een lelijke trap toedienen.'

[26] Koemans, *Australië op het eerste gezicht*, 77: 'lang niet de goeierd is van zijn uiterlijk'; 'Wordt hij kwaad, dan gaat hij op zijn staart zitten en scheurt met zijn sterke achterpoten zijn slachtoffer eenvoudig en doeltreffend van boven naar onder open.'

[27] Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 157-158: 'Zo springt er op het ogenblik een rijke kangoeroe door de woestijn rond, gekleed in een sportjasje.'

[28] McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 292: 'lachwekkende, aanvallige wezentjes, die als model hebben gediend voor de teddybeertjes van de kinderen'.

[29] Koemans, *Australië op het eerste gezicht*, 77: 'vreemde neus'; 'rare grapjassen, die in een soort onbeholpen slow motion de wonderlijkste capriolen ten beste geven'.

[30] MacInnes, *Australië en Nieuw-Zeeland*, 12: 'hoe aanminnig hij er ook uitziet, u met zijn vlijmscherpe klauwen de ogen kan uitkrabben als hij niet goed wordt behandeld'.

[31] Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 48: 'Hij had ze in Midden-Australië in de buurt van Alice Springs aan het werk gezien. Soms vinden de boeren daar twintig, dertig dode schapen, afgemaakt door

een enkele dingo. “Het zijn ware moordenaars, die niet tevreden zijn, voordat ze een hele kudde hebben afgemaakt. De jonge kalveren verscheuren ze voor de ogen van de koeien, die niets kunnen doen tegen de scherpe tanden van het beest.”’

32 Meissner, *Australië… wonderland!*, 41-42: ‘eend, otter en reptiel tegelijk’; ‘het zeldzaamste wezen ter aarde’.

33 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 292: ‘Eén enkele platypus heeft men eens naar de New Yorkse dierentuin gebracht, waar hij slechts enkele weken in leven bleef; er kwamen honderdduizenden mensen om er naar te kijken en de meesten dachten, dat het een grap was.’

34 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 293: ‘Iedereen die hem langs een hek heeft zien draven of hem kilometers lang heeft zien rennen in de koplampen van zijn auto, zal dat beamen.’

35 Smedts, *Australië nieuw vaderland*, 157: ‘Het is voorgekomen, dat mensen naar boven keken overtuigd, dat er een straaljager op komst was en dan merkten, dat een liervogel een grapje maakte.’

36 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 291: ‘Die middag vloog hij steeds om me heen. Ik drukte me soms twintig minuten lang bewegingloos tegen een klamme boomstam aan, terwijl hij steeds tevoorschijn schoot en weer verdween. Er waren ogenblikken, dat ik had durven zweren, dat hij niet meer dan vier of vijf meter van me af was, en misschien was dat ook wel zo. Als ik achter zijn spottende geluiden aankroop, begon hij van links naar rechts en [van] voor naar achter te schieten. Ik hoorde hem door het gebladerte strijken, maar ik kreeg hem nooit in het oog. Ik weet niet of er één vogel of twintig in die struiken zaten, maar één was het er in elk geval. / […] Toen de schemering begon te vallen en de modder me tot aan de knieën zat […] gaf ik het op. Op dat ogenblik dat ik me omdraaide om terug te keren, kwam hij de struiken uitrennen en begon op drie meter afstand onder een met mos begroeide boomstam naar wormen te zoeken.’

37 Meissner, *Australië… wonderland!*, 45: ‘Alle personen die bij het huis horen kent hij heel precies’; ‘en hij weet beslist meer van hen dan menigeen lief is. Want met zijn verstandige scherpe ogen ziet hij alles en beleeft er zijn plezier aan.’

38 Cnossen & Apperloo, *Australië en Nieuw-Zeeland*, 60.

39 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 253: ‘een ontzettend land, vlak, zonder afwisseling en praktisch zonder water, een wereld van sinister grijsgroen, dat geheel aan de slangen was overgelaten’.

40 Koemans, *Australië op het eerste gezicht*, 76: ‘net, toen hij zijn kop oprichtte en zijn gespleten tong uitstak een opzaniker met een stuk ijzerdraad had gegeven, waarvan het beest niet terug had’; ‘En, och, je treft die dingen zo vaak onder oude planken, in een boomstronk en zo maar, in deze eerste lentedagen, opgerold naast het hol.’

41 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, caption opposite p. 273: ‘Hij wordt wel tot zes meter lang en is menseneter.’

42 Beatty, *Kriskras door Australië*, caption between pp. 64 and 65: ‘niet genoeg jagers om de gelederen der krokodillen uit te dunnen’.

43 See e.g., Stichting Landverhuizing Nederland, *Australië*, 32.

44 Beatty, *Kriskras door Australië*, 87-93. Quote on p. 87: ‘Een oorverdovende explosie, en de glinsterende stalen schacht [van de harpoen] glijdt door de lucht en belandt met een doffe plof diep in de ingewanden van het geweldige lichaam.’

45 See Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 75-85.

46 Beatty *Kriskras door Australië*, inside cover: ‘verhaalt zeer levendig van de schoonheid van het landschap, van het rijkgeschakeerde leven in de natuur met haar planten en dieren, maar ook van het volk dat daar woont’.

47 Koemans, *Australië op het eerste gezicht*, 76-79.

48 ‘Als inboorlingen in Arnhemland zich in de buurt van een blanke nederzetting vestigen, ontwikkelen zij zich snel tot uitstekende veehoeders, daar zij met dieren vertrouwd zijn.’

49 McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 81.

[50] McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 354.

[51] Koemans, *Australië op het eerste gezicht*, 78. About the exceptional Aboriginal track sense, see also: McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 339-340.

[52] Lodewyckx, *Australië waarheen?*, 68.

[53] E.g., in Prins' children's book *Jack en Sheltie*.

[54] Koemans, *Australië op het eerste gezicht*, 78.

[55] MacInnes, *Australië en Nieuw-Zeeland*, 12: 'primitieve beschaving'; 'praehistorische mensen'; 'ongeveer zoals onze eigen voorouders dit tienduizenden jaren geleden gedaan moeten hebben'.

[56] McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 342: 'hoe ver hij ook van onze wereld afstaat en van onze denkgewoonten, zonder enig voorbehoud een mens'.

[57] Stichting Landverhuizing Nederland, *Australië*, 30: 'De Nederlander die naar Australië gaat om zich te vestigen in één der grote steden, of zelfs in de dichter bevolkte landbouwstreken niet te ver van de kust, zal wel niet veel van de dieren, die wij noemden aantreffen op zijn dagelijkse wandelingen'; 'Menig 20ste eeuwse bewoner van Sydney zal zelfs geen kangoeroe of koala hebben gezien, anders dan in Taronga Park, Sydney's dierentuin, of in Koala Park, een eind buiten de stad, waar het elders uitstervende diertje in vrijheid leeft, naast andere Australische dieren.'

[58] See McGuire, *Zó is Australië*, 292; Meissner, *Australië… wonderland*, 90-97.

[59] Meissner, *Australië… wonderland*, 37-38: 'een dierenparadijs zoals er in ons eigen werelddeel geen een te vinden is'; 'Binnen deze omheining leeft de dierenwereld volkomen veilig voor de gevaren der vrijheid en ze is zo aan de vele bezoekers gewend geraakt dat zij geen vrees meer heeft voor mensen. […] Waar men ook kijkt, overal ziet men tevreden dieren zonder enige schuwheid of angst. Zij hebben de mensen alleen van hun beste zijde leren kennen en vinden het, zoals hun gedrag bewijst, uitstekend dat ook deze tot hun natuurlijke omgeving behoren.'

[60] 'Taronga Park is meer dan een dierentuin. Hoewel klein, is het prachtig gelegen en wordt [het] terecht geprezen om zijn prachtige natuurlijke verblijfplaatsen zowel voor de mensen als de dieren. Het ligt recht tegenover Sydney Harbour. Een klein meisje knoopt vriendschap aan met een wallaby in de Kinderdierentuin.'

[61] Meissner, *Australië… wonderland*, 39: 'Healesville is werkelijk een paradijs, waarin ook de kleine mensen zich als engelen gedragen.'

[62] Beatty, *Kriskras door Australië*, 58-59: 'enkele afgelegen plekken in het bos slechts aan de gehardste woudlopers hun geheimen prijsgeven'.

[63] See about these features of travel literature: Armstrong, 'Reading', 211-212; and about the corresponding functions of Dutch emigration literature: Van Kalmthout, *Een sprong in het duister*, 15.

[64] I would like to thank Marijke van Faassen for her comments on an earlier version of this contribution.

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