

Their Land Rover followed trails laid by pioneers such as Hans Kruuk (who studied hyaenas), George Schaller (lions), Wolf Dietrich Kuhme (wild dogs) and photographers Alan Root and Hugo Van Lawick. One cannot forget that their book too has a long line of predecessors.

The contrast in hunting techniques that is implied by the title is a substantial part of the story but the style of the book is impressionistic and retains the fragmentary character of a field notebook. The picture that emerges is life on the African plains viewed through the window of a vehicle and the *dramatis personae* perform within this limited frame.

Set in a matrix that is both human and animal the authors have made a modest but charming contribution to the literature on Serengeti and its wildlife.

JONATHAN KINGDON

Otters in Britain by Liz Laidler. David & Charles, £7.95.

The Otter in Britain by Peter J. Neville Havins. Robert Hale, £7.95.

Although these books have almost identical titles, their contents differ considerably. This is largely because Liz Laidler has taken a more academic approach – citing the results of scientific research on otters, whereas Peter Havins' sources are more anecdotal.

The subject is not an easy one for a book as there are still enormous gaps in our knowledge about otter behaviour in the wild. Havins has got around this to some extent by devoting a chapter to otters world-wide and 50 pages (almost one-third of the text) to the history of otter hunting, a topic that obviously fascinates him – as do English hounds and terriers and the life history of the Atlantic salmon. But his obsession with the 'fight' between otter hunters and conservationists over legal protection for the otter becomes tedious after a while, and throughout the book there is much unnecessary repetition.

Laidler's book is much more thorough and accurate. She makes good use of the latest world-wide research on otter behaviour, and presents a better selection of good black and white photographs as well as some beautiful colour ones.

As both authors have much in common, being obvious otter fanatics and conservationists, it is perhaps not surprising that they come to similar conclusions. Laidler argues the case for the kind of environmental spirituality in western countries which is displayed by the Ashanti villagers in central Ghana, whilst Havins likens the otter to the soul – something which we neglect at our peril.

ANGELA KING

Badgers Without Bias, by Robert W. Howard. Abson Books, £1.50.

Despite all that has been written about tuberculosis in badgers and cattle, it has been very difficult to find basic essential information on the facts and arguments of the problem. This slender booklet sets out not only to redress this deficiency but to present the information objectively, and in simple terms. It succeeds admirably as a primer on the subject.

An introduction describes the nature of tuberculosis, a topic omitted from most accounts, and leads to discussions of TB in cattle, badgers and other species. The action of the Ministry of Agriculture in combating TB in cattle is described and is followed by a summary of the public reaction to the control programme of gassing badger sets.

At all times the author is careful to refrain from influencing the reader's opinion, and this makes for unsatisfactory reading where a topic is left in the air