

Reviews

ILLUSTRATED HANDBOOK OF SEA MAMMALS

SEA MAMMALS OF THE WORLD. Stonehouse, Bernard. 1985. Harmondsworth, Penguin. 160 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-14-007081-8. £4.95, US\$7.95.

This attractive and inexpensive book aims to provide a condensed guide to the world's marine mammals. It is not a field guide, though it can be used as such for many of the species. Rather it is a miniature handbook for readers seeking concise information about the different animals and it can be thoroughly recommended. It gives for most species their scientific classification and name, size, weight, external appearance, numbers of teeth, and geographical distribution. These details are followed by a short account, ranging from one sentence to half a page in length, of points of interest in their biology, including information on reproduction, food, exploitation and status. One or two accounts are inevitably out of date.

Almost all of the species are illustrated in colour alongside the text. The polar bear, sea otter, most of the pinnipeds and the sirenians, are shown against a background of their habitat. The great whales and many of the dolphins and porpoises are similarly shown swimming in the sea but some are drawn in field guide style without this background. The illustrations are generally good, but in one or two cases, eg the Mediterranean Monk Seal, the colouring does not agree with the description, and in some of the cetaceans, representation of the dappled effect of light through the water on their bodies could be misleading.

There is an introductory chapter on the evolution of marine mammals, their adaptation to life in water, and their conservation. The species accounts are followed by five distribution maps for pinnipeds, sirenians, the sea otter, marine otter and polar bear. Two other maps indicate the distribution of occurrences of cetaceans, except for the great whales which are not included. A short list of books for further reading and an index complete the book. The reading list includes the original but not the revised editions of King's *Seals of the World* (1983) and Slijper's *Whales* (1979). (S. G. Brown, 24 Orchard Way, Oakington, Cambridge CB4 5BQ)

JOHN RAE, ARCTIC EXPLORER

DR JOHN RAE. Richards, R. L. 1985. Whitby, Caedmon. 231 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-905355. £16.50.

Scholars have long awaited a full biography of the 19th-century Arctic explorer Dr John Rae (1813-1893), and publication of the volume under review has given particular satisfaction to the staff of the Scott Polar Research Institute. In 1968 the Institute acquired Dr Rae's manuscript autobiography at public sale, and for a time we seriously considered publishing it. Unfortunately the autobiography, written late in Rae's life, is a long rambling document, difficult to read, and it breaks off abruptly just before a crucial date in Rae's career, April 1854, when he achieved enduring fame by discovering the fate of Sir John Franklin's last North-west Passage expedition. The autobiography, although certainly a valuable record of Rae's early life, proved to be no substitute for an adequate

biography. As chance would have it, though, the Institute acquired this document just before Dr Richards began his systematic study of Rae's life, and the manuscript served him both as a major source and as a stimulus to his research. Dr Richards continued his careful work for a further 15 years, and it is a great pity that he died suddenly in December 1983, just after making arrangements for its publication but before he could see it in print.

This book will be his monument. He has pulled together a wide range of source material, in addition to the autobiography, to produce what will surely be regarded as the definitive biography of John Rae.

Richards first approached Rae as a fellow Scottish medical doctor, rather than as an authority on Arctic history, a fact that occasionally worried him. He need not have been concerned, for he covers the Arctic and non-Arctic phases of Rae's career with equal competence, and is helped by Rae's own voluminous writings to present an evocative account of his hero's career. He quotes both Rae and his contemporaries frequently and to good effect. Richards' own Scottish medical background gives him a special insight into some less well known aspects of Rae's life. He presents a particularly engaging account of Rae's boyhood in Orkney, he creates an admirable image of Rae's medical training, a subject about which Rae recorded almost nothing, and his descriptions of Rae's medical experiences as a Hudson's Bay Company surgeon are illuminating. In subsequent chapters on Rae's Arctic expeditions Richards does, of course, draw heavily on existing publications, but he has nevertheless worked in much hitherto unpublished material.

An introductory chapter establishes the historical context of Rae's expeditions to survey the mainland coast of Arctic Canada, 1846–54, and there is a concluding assessment of Rae's refinement of native American techniques of living and travelling in Arctic regions. Rae's achievements deserve to be better known, and this admirable book deserves to be widely read.

Dr John Rae is available directly from the publisher, Caedmon of Whitby, 9 John Street, Whitby, England, YO21 3ET. (Clive Holland, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge, CB2 1ER)

PEOPLE, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT IN NORTHERN CANADA

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL INTERESTS IN THE NORTH: Third National Workshop on People, Resources, and the Environment North of 60°. Canadian Arctic Resources Committee. 1984. Ottawa, CARC. 758p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-919996-18-3. Can\$19.95.

This publication covers the proceedings of CARC's third and latest national workshop. Format is similar to that used for the first two conferences, which were published as *Arctic Alternatives* (1973) and *Northern Transitions* (1978) and readers familiar with these volumes will know what to expect. The theme of this workshop was 'national and regional interest in resource management in the North', with the major plenary session devoted to land claims issues. Working groups covered areas of natural resource jurisdiction and political development, regional and land-use planning, conservation of environmentally significant areas, mineral development, renewable resources management, inland water resources, ocean management, and development in the Beaufort Sea region.

Although the task of transcribing and collating any conference proceedings is always an unenviable one, the editors seem to have achieved a creditable product that is not too unwieldy. However, the casual reader is still faced with quite a problem when looking for information and often it is necessary to search a whole section for specific data. As such the publication offers good background reading but is likely to be of most use for