

## Book reviews

An Indonesian language edition of the book has been published, and if this succeeds in contributing to the appreciation of these problems by the next generation of Indonesians the book will have performed a valuable function.

Jeffrey Sayer, Senior Programme Adviser, Tropical Forest Conservation, IUCN, Switzerland.

### **A Feast in the Wild**

Russell Kyle

Kudu Publishing in Wildlife Management, 1987, 203 pp, HB £15.95, PB £9.95

The expanding economy of deer farming and the relative popularity of venison as 'healthy' lean meat gives support to Russell Kyle's thesis that wild animals can and should be harvested. The argument is that, just as the wild aurochs is preserved in its descendant, the domestic cow, so other wild species could be saved from extinction by their domestication or by efficient ranching, sometimes in favourable new regions.

The author of this worldwide review of animals that could be economically exploited is persuasive, but the experimental ranching of wild ungulates over the last 30 years has not proved to be practical except with deer, saiga, and a few other species in localized instances. This is because of difficulties over the slaughter and distribution of carcasses, personal taste which makes people hesitant to try new meats, thereby creating a market only for pet foods, and the inevitable poaching that follows once a financial inducement is provided for the killing of any animal.

The ranching of wild ungulates in Africa received much publicity in the 1960s when the proposition was put forward that domestic cattle, sheep and goats were exotic species whose condition seldom matched that of the indigenous wild animals. Therefore, why not harvest these wild animals in preference to the domestic, which are so much more prone to starvation and disease?

Now, 20 years later, with the detailed studies of agriculturalists and anthropologists, it is realized that domestic livestock have been in Africa for very nearly as long as they have been in Eurasia, that pastoralism is an integral and well-adapted part of many African economies, and that

because cattle can be both milked and driven to an abattoir, this outweighs the apparent advantages of the more sleek wild animals. This has been discussed by Keith Eltringham in his book, *Wildlife Resources and Economic Development* (1984, John Wiley & Sons), and it is regrettable that this work is not included in Kyle's bibliography.

Nevertheless, *A Feast in the Wild* is aptly named for it should be possible, with efficient management, to harvest the meat from a great variety of wild animals, from capybaras to kangaroos, and this very readable book should give encouragement to a broadening of attitudes and tastes, especially with the recipes at the back. Perhaps the inclusion of a recipe for turtle meat is questionable, but those for wildebeest in beer, roast guinea-pig, and casserole of grasscutter should add much to international cuisine.

Russell Kyle has been interested in wildlife management since 1971; his involvement with publishing begins with this book, and we must wish him success with his important new venture. Juliet Clutton-Brock, *British Museum (Natural History)*, London, UK.

### **The Natural History of the USSR**

Algirdas Knystautas

Century Hutchinson Publishers, London, 1987, 224 pp, £14.95

**Zapovedniki SSSR: Zapovedniki Dal'nego Vostoka**, in Russian, (*Nature Reserves of the USSR series: Nature Reserves of the Far East.*)

V.E. Sokolov and E.E. Syroechkovskii, general editors Mysl', Moscow, 1985, 319 pp.

**Okhranyaemye Prirodnye Territorii Mira: Natsional'nye Parki, Zapovedniki, Rezervaty**, in Russian (*The Protected Natural Territories of the World: National Parks, Nature Reserves, Reservations*)

B.A. Borisov, L.S. Belousova and A.A. Vinokurov

Agropromizdat, Moscow, 1985, 310 pp

Following Gerald and Lee Durrell's *Durrell in Russia*, the book to accompany their TV series on the nature reserves of the Soviet Union, a young Lithuanian biologist, Dr Algirdas Knystautas, has written the first book to appear in English

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Caucasian lily, from *Natural History of the USSR*, by Algirdas Knystautas, Century Hutchinson.

devoted specifically to the natural history of the USSR. It is handsomely produced and profusely illustrated with excellent colour photographs and the occasional map, and deserves to be successful.

In 60,000 words, which can therefore be only a fairly non-specific introduction for the layman, the author devotes a chapter to physical geography and then describes the different ecosystems of the planet's largest country: the Arctic and tundra, the mixed forests and the great Russian—Siberian coniferous forest or taiga—the

largest forest in the world—the mountains, steppes, deserts and wetlands.

In a chapter on conservation he points out that, despite much education, legislation and often successful activity, 'it is sadly still true that there is little appreciation of the urgency of conservation in many parts of the country'. But, despite the enormous problems, estimable work has been—and is being—done in the USSR, which has produced excellent Red Data Books on its rare and endangered species and is participating in the international conservation movement.

Dr Vladimir Flint, the best-known Soviet ornithologist in the West and winner of the World Wildlife Fund Gold medal in 1985, has contributed a delightful and vivid foreword of his experiences in the utterly contrasting habitats of his enormous country. Appendices list the most typical animals of the 15 major regions of the USSR, while a bibliography reveals how little there is in English on the subject.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union produces a mass of Russian-language publications, both scientific and popular, on its natural history and both the theory and practice of its conservation techniques. Much to be welcomed—albeit restricted to Russian-language readers—is the ten volume colour-illustrated series *Zapovedniki SSSR* (State Nature Reserves of the USSR) covering the country's 141 *zapovedniki* or state nature reserves, which embrace a total 143,000 sq km. This first volume, compiled by six distinguished Soviet scientists, describes the 13 enormously varied reserves of the Soviet Far East including Wrangel Island, home of the snow goose and polar bear in the Arctic Ocean, the Ussuri reserve with its Amur leopards and Siberian tigers, and the remarkable marine reserve off Vladivostok.

Lastly, three Soviet conservationists have produced an excellent handbook or gazetteer on the protected areas of 170 countries, listing their size, dates of origin, legal status, objectives, etc., with a map for almost every country, plus bibliography and detailed index of place names. A marvellous compilation, which would be invaluable for conservationists and others throughout the world if translated. British publishers please note.

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