

Book reviews

Islands in the Bush

Malcolm Coe
George Philip, 1985, £14.95

Kora National Reserve lies in the arid thirlands of northern Kenya, a gasping wilderness of heat-stunned *Commiphora* thickets that echo to the insane braying of yellow-billed hornbills. Constant droughts bleach the landscape to a ghastly silvery grey. The sun glitters on a million cruel thorns and bald granite inselbergs float away into the endless distance—the Islands in the Bush, which gave Malcolm Coe the title for his book.

In 1983 Dr Coe led an expedition to this hostile but hauntingly beautiful land to document the genetic diversity of a wilderness reserve threatened by both the trampling and browsing of domestic stock and plans to dam the Tana River, whose shady banks—overhung with doum palms and magnificent Tana River poplars—form Kora's northern boundary.

Long before Kora was officially gazetted in 1973, it had become famous as the home of 'Bwana Game': George Adamson and his lions. Reintroducing these big cats to the wild may be of little scientific value, but as the author rightly points out, Adamson's efforts in conservation terms are immeasurable, and it is probably true to say that the reserve would not have been established without him.

Malcolm Coe is a natural teacher and, one suspects, a born leader, with the ability to fill others with his own boundless enthusiasm. His account of the expedition is laced with anecdote, incident and humour. During their stay in Kora, he and his team had to contend not only with George Adamson's lions but also the *nyama mdogo*, the numerous smaller but no less formidable residents such as *Pandinus* scorpions, poisonous eight-inch centipedes and burrowing vipers.

An entertaining book, lifted out of the ordinary by Malcolm Coe's deep and genuine affection for Africa's wildlife and landscapes, and the people who wrest such a meagre living from its harsh environment.

Brian Jackman, *naturalist, author and journalist*

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Wildlife Resources and Economic Development

S.K. Eltringham
John Wiley & Sons, 1984, £24.50

The first thing that strikes one when faced with this book is the enormity of the task—to summarize in about 325 pages all matters relating to wildlife exploitation. Its 16 chapters cover Wildlife and Tourism, Domestication, Ranching, Cropping, and Trade, as well as more general topics such as Population Ecology of Wildlife. It does seem that the sheer breadth of the subject matter has inevitably led to some of the text being out-of-date, and mistakes can be detected. My particular interests are related to wildlife trade, and I was a little concerned to read, in the discussion of CITES controls, that the 'USA have specifically banned the import of any spotted cat skins as a conservation measure'. This statement cannot be supported, since the USA has actively opposed the listing of all spotted cats on the Convention because of their (continuing) trade in bobcat and lynx. Other similar errors have crept into the text, but provided this book is not quoted as a scientific review of the subject and is treated as I assume it is intended—as background reading for undergraduates—then it fills an extremely valuable niche. With a book of this type, the main problem is always going to be that it will become out-of-date probably before it is even printed. The TRAFFIC Bulletin produced by the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit produces an enormous amount of data every year, and CITES is revised every 2 years—not to mention commercial aspects, such as the fur industry, which is usually two steps ahead of conservation as well. I very much hope that this book will run into a second edition so that some of the errors can be removed.

John A. Burton

International Wildlife Law

Simon Lyster
Grotius Publications Ltd, 1985, PB £12.00 (US\$17.50),
HB £25.00 (US\$37.00)
Available from Grotius Publications Ltd, Sales Division,
Llandysul, Dyfed SA44 4BQ, UK. Add, for postage, £2.40 for
European destinations and £4.85 (US\$7.00) to USA by
airmail.

This is a splendid handbook on all the major

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treaties that affect wildlife, with the exception of those concerned with fish involved in commercial fisheries. The author justifies the exclusion on the grounds that they are already covered in other reviews. However, I would have welcomed an outline summary by Simon Lyster, since the other reviews do not treat fish as wildlife, but as fisheries; the book I use for reference, *International Regulation of Marine Fisheries*, by Albert W. Koers, is an almost impenetrable labyrinth.

The layout is exemplary. At a glance, it is possible to find out not only what each Convention does, but also what it does not do. Furthermore, Lyster is careful to describe contentious points of interpretation. The book is divided into four main parts. Part I describes 'Basic Principles of International Wildlife Law', Part II covers Whales; Seals and Polar Bears; Birds and Vicuna, Parts III and IV deal with the major Conventions, including the African Convention, Berne, Ramsar, and CITES. Finally, an Appendix gives the texts of 12 of the most important and current Conventions. This alone makes the book remarkable value as the texts are often expensive when purchased from Government printing offices and often very difficult to obtain.

My only criticism is very minor: the historical background to each subject is necessarily brief and the truncated history might be misleading. In the history of CITES, the author cites the earliest demand for wildlife trade controls as being made in 1911, but the African Convention, described earlier in the book, which controlled the trade in ivory and some other wildlife products, antedates this. The earliest demands for international controls on wildlife trade in fact date back to the 1870s when vast numbers of tropical birds began to be imported for the millinery trade. The early campaigns against the plumage trade led to the formation in the 1880s of both the RSPB and the Audubon Society, and through their various campaigns and legislation evolved CITES and the modern conservation movement.

However, this is a nit-picking criticism in a book that will undoubtedly become a standard reference in the library of any conservationist and should run through many editions. Hopefully, the publishers will keep it in print and revise it regularly to keep up with changes in the major Conventions.

John A. Burton

Insect Conservation—An Australian Perspective

T.R. New

Dr W. Junk, Dordrecht, Netherlands, 1984, HB £27.95

The subject matter of this book is rather more international than one might suppose from the title. The author draws heavily on European and North American research and case-histories to make his own argument for protecting Australia's extraordinarily rich and fascinating insect fauna. Because of the lack of experience in conserving Australia's insects, there are new fears that many species will become extinct in the near future through human agencies—mainly habitat destruction. A high proportion of these are likely to be undescribed.

Threatened species have already been recognized in all the major insect orders, including mayflies on Mt Kosciusko, the relic damselfly *Hemiphysalia mirabilis* in Victoria (recently re-discovered), and stoneflies on the Otway Ranges and Mt Donna Buang. Australia has some extraordinary species in the Orthoptera (grasshoppers and relatives). The Cooloola monster, a heavy subterranean insect with powerful digging legs, has a very restricted range. For some species it may be too late—the Lord Howe Island stick insect, once believed to survive on a small rock outcrop near Lord Howe, is now almost certainly extinct.

The author calls for a number of actions to further the conservation of Australian insects. These include a broad educational programme, aimed particularly at politicians and other decision-makers; more attention to habitat destruction and pollution; listing of threatened species; continuing progress towards adequate habitat representation, with much more use being made of insects in identifying such sites; increased funding for taxonomic work, and field guides and more autecological studies. Emphasis is placed on the need to recognize that listing species as 'protected' is not alone sufficient for conservation.

Sadly, the book's high price but modest design (printed from camera-ready copy) will probably