

## Book reviews

On the whole, however, these are the merest quibbles rather than serious shortcomings, not least because the publication of this book in itself plugs a conspicuous gap amongst the literature previously available on the larger mammals. Journals apart, most of the recent and, more to the point, easily accessible information on the peccaries is thus scattered in specialised or regional texts, or diluted in generalised accounts, and very few authors (most of whom have also perpetuated the irritating tendency to annexe the peccaries as country cousins of the suids) have accorded the peccaries anything like adequate treatment. Sowls's book accordingly stands alone, not only because there is nothing currently in print with which to compare it, but also because no one has previously attempted a synthesis of the available information on their general biology, behaviour and ecology to the extent contained in this volume. Moreover, the result is duly seasoned with a lavish quantity of text figures and photographs, and a really excellent bibliography.

Even so, as Sowls is the first to point out, there is still a remarkable paucity of information on two of the three extant species, i.e. the white-lipped peccary *T. pecari* and the recently described giant or Chacoan peccary *Catagonus wagneri*. This state-of-the-art knowledge is reflected in the text, with no less than 140 pages (of a total 159 pages devoted to the accounts of each species) dealing exclusively with the collared peccary *T. tajacu*, the only peccary whose range extends into the southern United States, with all that implies in respect of research accessibility by wildlife and game management authorities. Despite this inevitable bias, however, the author manages to salvage his tome from becoming a treatise on the main character, by drawing comparisons between species wherever available data permit, and by concluding his account with an excellent section entitled 'peccaries and people'; the latter comprising a review of the cultural and economic importance of these animals to the Amerindians, and a more depressing scenario of exploitative impact by European peoples, including a burgeoning skin trade and the profligate destruction of habitat—a combination of factors which, Sowls argues, is already imperilling the giant peccary. The once-presumed extinction of this species, which was first described from late

Pleistocene deposits in the 1930s but not discovered as a living form in the Gran Chaco of Paraguay until 1974, may therefore prove as prophetic as it was premature.

*William L.R. Oliver, Chairman, IUCN/SSC Pigs and Peccaries Specialist Group*

### **Sydney Parkinson, Artist of Cook's Endeavour Voyage**

Edited by D.J. Carr

Croom Helm/British Museum (Natural History), 1984, £29.95

### **Travel Diaries of a Naturalist**

Peter Scott, Edited by Miranda Weston-Smith  
Collins, 1983, £12.95

These two books, both remarkable in their own rights, allow interesting comparisons to be made, separated as they are by about 200 years. Sir Peter's book is based on his diaries, which he has been keeping since 1956, and which by 1983 had filled 50 fat notebooks. These diaries are also sketchbooks, and this published edition is fully illustrated with examples from the diaries. Sir Peter's wife is also an accomplished photographer, and a selection of her photographs set the scene for places visited. Being actual diaries, written more as an *aide-memoire* than designed for publication, there is an immediacy about them unlikely to be found in a travel book. The only criticism I could level at them is that of arousing an interest that could only be satisfied by publishing all 50 volumes!

Perhaps the most impressive of Peter Scott's art is its breadth—although mostly known for his waterfowl, this book shows him for what he really is, an all-round, complete naturalist and artist, equally at home sketching bird behaviour, fishes underwater, pages of field guides, African big game. My favourite is the school of hammerhead sharks which cover the page in an almost (but not quite) symmetrical pattern.

The volume on Sydney Parkinson, by contrast, concerns the work of an artist who died at the age of 26. The 11 authors have contributed erudite essays, which range from the readable general introductions to the voyage, and to Parkinson and the other artists by Wilfred Blunt, to the lengthy and rather out of place appendix on 'The

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Adelie penguin swimming underwater at Hope Bay, Antarctic Peninsula (from Peter Scott's *Travel Diaries of a Naturalist*).

identity of Captain Cook's kangaroo'. But it is for the plates that most people will want to buy it.  
*John A. Burton*

### Latin American Wildlife Trade Laws

Kathryn S. Fuller and Byron Swift  
World Wildlife Fund—US \$11.50 from TRAFFIC (USA),  
1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20009,  
USA

Containing over 350 pages of facts in Spanish and English, this is not an easy book to check factually, apart from scattered misspellings of scientific names, which are inevitable in a compilation such as this. Anyone working in any connection with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora will find this an absolute goldmine of information. National legislation is summarised, country by country, and the protected species are listed.

Although the primary task of the TRAFFIC Group is to assemble data, it would have been useful in this work to have had a little more interpretation—most of its users are going to need considerable help and guidance. In particular, it would have been useful to have information as to whether or not each country fully complies with CITES. My reading of the summaries was that very few South American countries are taking effective steps to control the trade in wild plants, for instance. However, as is made clear, this is the first step in an on-going project, and modern information retrieval systems are ideally suited to providing regular updates. The compilers are to be congratulated; let us hope that governments and their enforcement agencies use it.

*John A. Burton*  
*Book reviews*

### Riches of the Rain Forest

W. Veevers-Carter  
Oxford University Press, 1984, S\$36.50

From cover to cover of *Riches of the Rain Forest*, Wendy Veevers-Carter leads the reader intelligently through the biological complexities of the Malesian region's major natural community. The approach is that of a rather factual introduction; yet it is never dull, and the breadth of the writer's education is obvious on every page. English, Latin, Malay and Indonesian names mingle easily in the text, and even the Greek origin of the dipterocarps' name—the huge dipterocarp trees comprise the dominant family of the South-East Asian forests—is explained. (The name comes from the Greek for 'two-winged seed': *dis pteron karpos*.) When describing the genus *Eugenia*, which includes the clove, the author shows how the local names, which are presumably ancient, reflect commonly accepted scientific taxonomy: a phenomenon that is a lot more widespread in the tropics than most people realize.

Trees that are important to animals, such as the many figs, and plants of more commercial note, such as the rattans, the hardwood trees and numerous fruit trees, are among those that are described sufficiently to give their essential 'flavour' and, hopefully, to excite the interest of many readers to learn more. Some of the narratives lead to fascinating digressions, among which my favourite is the reference to the improbably named Monsieur Pierre Poivre, an eighteenth century French botanist with a keen interest in spices. Even Captain Bligh of the *Bounty* manages to make an appearance in this book, due to the fact that his ship was carrying breadfruit seedlings on its ill-fated voyage.

All this, and yet there are also easy explanations of topics from gene pools and coevolution to soil quality and poisons in plants! Nevertheless, this is a gentle introduction, strongly to be recommended for those whose knowledge of the rain forest is minimal and whose interest may yet be latent. It is illustrated throughout by the superb artistry of Mohamed Anwar of the Bogor Herbarium, and my only real criticism of the book is that he has been grossly under-credited with nothing more than a mention in the Acknowledgments. Without doubt, the combined work of