

## REVIEWS

A HISTORY OF DOMESTICATED ANIMALS. By F. E. ZEUNER, D.Sc., Ph.D. Hutchinson, London, 1963. 84s.

According to the publisher's note inside the dust jacket, this most interesting book is the first ever to be published on the subject in the English language and the first for twenty-five years in any language. It is divided into two parts. In Part One the author discusses his theory that domestication came about as a result of the social relationships of man and animals, rather than in consequence of a conscious attempt by primitive man to exploit his environment. Part Two consists of twenty-four chapters, each devoted to a particular species or group of animals. Altogether some forty species of domestic animal are considered, ranging from elephants through fowls to silkworms and honey bees.

The author has spent a great deal of time and has devoted much care in assembling his facts, many of which are the result of original research and are hitherto unpublished. The 560 pages abound with interesting and unexpected material such as the predilection of reindeer for human urine. This extraordinary habit is almost certainly the result of an attempt by the reindeer to obtain certain salts which may be absent from its rather restricted diet and it is interesting to note that a recent development in the feeding of domestic cattle and sheep involves the use of urea as a foodstuff in order to stimulate the growth and activity of ruminal flora. In this way animals eating coarse herbage may be able to digest the fibre more completely. Rapid digestion of fibre needs a readily available source of nitrogen for the synthesis of proteins by the organisms.

The book ends with an extensive bibliography and a very comprehensive index. Scattered throughout the text are many excellent line drawings and photographs, but it is a pity that some of the latter lack pictorial quality or have been poorly reproduced.

This well-produced volume is expensive but it is one that will amply repay shelf space in the libraries of archaeologists, historians, agriculturalists and indeed all who are interested in man's association with the animal kingdom.

M. H. W.

THE GREEN TURTLE AND MAN. By JAMES J. PARSONS. University of Florida Press. \$8.

This is an unusual book, though the story it tells is common enough as the history of so many species falls into the same pattern—discovery, utilization, over-exploitation, followed by near extinction and finally, conservation. It is unusual, however, because it is written by a geographer and not by a biologist and it deals with a reptile of economic importance. Mammals seem uppermost in conservationists' minds these days—this book is a useful reminder that other animals have their uses as well. Dr. Parsons writes entirely from the utilization and conservation point of view and there is little reference to the biology of the turtle except where it bears on this. This makes the book a most useful work of reference, for conservation data is usually tucked away in works of general biology.

This is the kind of book that ought to find its way into Ministries of Natural Resources all over the tropics, where conservation of fauna is still sometimes regarded as the concern only of "game-hunters" and sentimentalists. After all, where else in the animal kingdom will one find a

species that turns seaweed into meat and then obligingly crawls ashore to be slaughtered? Here, above all, seems a case for rational conservation and utilization, the Costa Rica conservation project is not isolated but it is all too rare.

Having said, without reservation, that this is an excellent and most useful book the reviewer feels reluctant to make any adverse criticism. But it does seem that price (nearly three pounds) may put it out of reach of many zoologists who have to buy their own books, and the size (quarto) will make it an awkward shape on many bookshelves. As only two thirds of each page are occupied by the subject matter, the lavish production and price might well have been reduced to give the book a wider circulation.

J. I. M.

**FRESHWATER FISHES OF THE WORLD.** By GUNTHER STERBA. Translated and revised by Dr. Denys Tucker. London, Vista Books, 1962. 70s.

In the fresh waters of Britain we are accustomed only to top fish such as trout and salmon and a group of coarse fish mostly belonging to the carp family. In other parts of the world, and particularly in the tropics, the range is vastly bigger and this is covered in Professor Sterba's large and copiously illustrated book on the world's freshwater fishes. The treatment is systematic, that is each natural family is considered in turn, with a straightforward description of each species dealt with, as well as notes on its distribution in nature and in particular the methods of keeping it in an aquarium. Here at a glance those interested in fish can learn of the breeding habits of the lesser-known species as well as the more ordinary mollies, guppies and swordtails.

Of particular importance at the moment are the cichlids, in some of which the fertilized eggs are brooded in the mouth of one of the parents until they hatch. Even then the tiny fry may still seek shelter in the parental mouth when threatened. One of these fishes, *Tilapia mossambica*, is not only interesting biologically, but is also of considerable economic importance, being farmed in fish-ponds in many parts of the world, particularly in S.E. Asia, where it helps to increase the local production of good animal protein.

This book gives much information on this essential part of the world's aquatic fauna.

G. V.

**TASMANIAN WILD LIFE.** By MICHAEL SHARLAND. Melbourne University Press. 86 p., 14 plates. 25s. (Aus).

This is a rather slight account of Tasmanian mammals, with a chapter on snakes. It cannot be taken seriously as a "field-study book" or as invaluable to bushwalkers and naturalists, as the dust-jacket claims. It is, as its author states, a popular account, and it consists of a series of short essays which combine brief but useful descriptions, animal anecdotes, and statements strongly coloured by personal likes and dislikes.

Reliance upon the few available literary sources is clearly acknowledged and has led to the restatement of much reliable information. But non-literary sources have occasionally let the author down. Tasmanian deer are said to be a special kind derived from the cross-breeding of Fallow deer with deer from India and Africa! Mont Turner's claim to have found the desert hopping-mouse in Tasmania, which has not been verified, is hardly a sufficient ground for listing the animal as native to Tasmania.