

**Uganda Quest**, by Ernest Neal. Collins, £2.25.

**The Elephants of Knysna**, by Nick Carter. Purnell, Cape Town, R.3.75.

Dr Neal's quest was for the medium-sized carnivores of the Queen Elizabeth National Park in Uganda, and this eventually led him to study the banded mongoose about which he gives much new information. But there is much more to this splendid book than an account of these small animals, interesting as they are. Using a deceptively simple narrative form, he describes most of the major animals of the park – elephants, hippos, buffaloes, lions, hyenas, bats and birds – their relationships with each other and with the savanna on which they live. He also describes his nocturnal wanderings in search of the more elusive carnivores. There are fascinating accounts, for example, of a serval hunting by sound in the long grass and of a lioness driving hyenas from a kill. He also explains most perceptively how to identify eyes reflected by headlights in the dark. Indeed, he demonstrates continuously what can be achieved in a relatively short time by a really experienced observer. I may be prejudiced in favour of the Queen Elizabeth Park but I have enjoyed this book as much as anything I have read about African wildlife for a very long time. It is an excellent portrait of the area, superbly illustrated by twenty-four pages of the author's own colour photographs.

Nick Carter's book is not of the same quality. It is the popular account of the Knysna elephant survey mentioned briefly in *Oryx*, 10 6: a prolonged game of 'hide and seek' with a small group of forest-living elephants which are both elusive and thoroughly sophisticated in their dealings with man. A good story is spoiled, however, by a somewhat affected style and a reluctance to give straightforward facts when these are called for. But the author does not exaggerate when writing about the elephants or when describing what happens when you get too close to them by mistake – their eyesight can be embarrassingly good. The few survivors live further south than any other elephants in Africa and are in serious need of proper protection. Let us hope that Nick Carter's recommendations are accepted and that a permanent sanctuary is established in the Harkerville Forest.

RENNIE BERE

**Last Survivors** by Noel Simon and Paul Géroudet. Patrick Stephens, £4.75.

If the authors of this work had attempted to cover all the 275 mammals and 300 odd birds on the *Red Data Books'* lists of endangered species, they would have had to compress to such an extent that even their large volume could have been little more than a catalogue, useful for reference. Instead they have chosen to produce an eminently readable book by selecting 36 mammals and 12 birds in various degrees of danger of extinction to illustrate the problems of conservation. This gives them scope to write a series of more leisurely essays with descriptions of each of the chosen species, their breeding habitat, food and range, the numbers still surviving, the dangers to which they are exposed and the steps that are being taken – or that need to be taken – for their protection. In this way they are able to devote as much as a dozen pages to the tiger.

Their choice of species is inevitably arbitrary but they have tried hard to make it representative both of the zoological orders and of the