

Book reviews

aspects of legislation still to be ratified. The only missing item is an index, which I think would be useful. However, the handbook sequence is logically arranged and details can be found.

The comments by the author on the various effects of EEC policy on Britain are set out in a perceptive assessment with rational comments. The reader is left to make his or her own judgements on such EEC statements (referring to its application in a plant protection context) as the definition of grass as 'lawn' as opposed to grass as 'Plant' where different regulations apply. . . .

A very useful explanation of the Directives, Regulations and Decisions enabled me to understand at last the finer points between them in an EEC context.

The author is to be congratulated on producing a useful account of all aspects of the EEC policy as they affect the environment and our policies in Britain.

Whether you are concerned with wildlife, water standards for freshwater fish or any aspect of the environment, you will find this book a valuable source of information. All conservationists should read the introductory essay.

*Paul Whalley
Department of Entomology
British Museum (Natural History)*

Primates of the World: Distribution, Abundance and Conservation

Jaclyn H. Wolfheim

University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1983, \$46.00

This volume is a magnificent assemblage of maps and data (especially the summary tables at the end), with a thorough discussion and evaluation of the status and threats for each of the 151 species of primate described. Following the explanatory introduction, each species (35 prosimians, 41 New World monkeys, 65 Old World monkeys and 10 apes) is dealt with in terms of: (1) taxonomy, (2) geographic range, (3) abundance and density, (4) habitat, (5) factors affecting populations—habitat alteration, human

predation, pest control, collection, (6) conservation action. There are then 40 pages of discussion of these different features, which are grouped into a constellation of ultimate (geographic range, body size, density and habitat) and proximate (habitat alteration and human predation) determinants of population status, the former related to survival, the latter to extinction. Thus, it is possible, from the impressive body of quantitative data amassed, to deduce a novel status rating for each species, with results more pessimistic than the *IUCN Red Data Book*, CITES or the US Endangered Species Act would predict—58 per cent of primate species threatened (34 per cent severely so, mainly on Madagascar and Asian islands) and 23 per cent vulnerable, with only 20 per cent 'safe' (IUCN gives only 15 per cent as endangered and 18 per cent as vulnerable). There is finally a vast and most useful bibliography containing about 1300 references.

This then is the book that primate conservationists need, and Jaclyn Wolfheim is to be congratulated on producing such a comprehensive survey, a truly formidable task. But why has it taken so long to produce and how relevant is it today? My correspondence file shows that the search for data started in 1973; the reference list contains virtually nothing published since 1979 (there are four references to one 1980 book). So what happened during the last four years, given the urgency of the conservation movement, and why could the book not be updated with the wealth of relevant information that has appeared since 1980? Since the plight of primates is demonstrably worse than that estimated by international agencies, then maybe the message this book contains today will promote the required action. But think what might have been achieved if this evidence had been made available four years ago? To be fair, maybe conservation agencies have had the results of this survey for some time.

Thus, it will be an invaluable reference book for primatologists for some time, synthesising what is known about the ecology, behaviour, distribution and conservation problems and achievements for each species. The numerous gaps in information, often crucial, should promote the necessary research and action. One sympathises with the

Oryx Vol 18 No 4

Book reviews

taxonomic problems surrounding this kind of analysis, and the author has opted for simplicity—for ‘lumping’ generally accepted species into one in several cases. One could argue that it is more valid to be a ‘splitter’ for conservation purposes, if one is concerned with conserving the full array of variation that occurs. I naturally turned to the section on gibbons to assess the usefulness of the analysis, and found that agile, moloch and Muller’s gibbon had been treated with lar gibbons (recognised as separate species on the basis of songs and pelage by all field workers) with thoroughly confusing results. The same applies to the treatment of all species of the *Presbytis aygula* and *melalophos* group as one, and, I imagine, to *Macaca nigra*, *Cercopithecus aethiops*, *Colobus badius* and *Ateles paniscus*; there is also no clear separation of information on lowland and mountain gorillas, and no mention of the ban on exports of *Macaca mulatta* from India in the late 1970s.

The tardy publication and lumping together of distinctive primate populations are my main disappointments with an otherwise excellent volume, full of important and fascinating information that has been very well analysed.

David J. Chivers
Sub-Dept of Veterinary Anatomy,
University of Cambridge

Cranes of the World

Paul A. Johnsgard

Croom Helm, London, 1983, £25.00

The author of this handsomely produced work justifies its coming into being only 10 years after Walkinshaw’s *Cranes of the World* on the twin grounds that the precarious status of many crane species requires fresh examination and that Walkinshaw’s study lacked comparative analyses and maps. Being involved in bird conservation and having had cause—for other reasons than conservation—to resort to Walkinshaw’s book. I fully support Johnsgard’s line: I would even say this new work is overdue.

Johnsgard has a history of writing bird family and such like monographs (*Waterfowl of North*

America, Grouse of the World, Plovers, Sandpipers and Snipes of the World) and his experience in organisation and synthesis at this level of interest makes *Cranes of the World* an attractively professional piece of documentation, each species being dealt with very fully, and with a most useful sequence of introductory chapters on the family’s biology and conservation; yet I also find it mildly disappointing, precisely because, lucid and serviceable though it is, it is only a professional piece of documentation (where both ‘professional’ and ‘documentation’ become slightly pejorative terms). First, the book is a relentless recital of findings in other sources, unrelieved (so far as I have read) by any personal information or even commentary from the author. Second, the sources used are sometimes themselves merely syntheses of other sources. The account of the blue crane, for example, gets by on just seven references, taken or derived from standard publications; and to say, under Range of wattled crane, that its ‘status in Zaïre is scarcely better . . . (than) totally unknown’ shows a remarkable lack of initiative, possibly therefore of interest: at any rate, there are at least nine sources published before 1978, all available at the Alexander (Edward Grey Institute) Library where Johnsgard says he spent time researching this book, which could have told him rather more than that ‘the south-eastern corner . . . may support some birds, especially in the Upemba Basin region’. This is scarcely reprehensible, but it confirms my feeling that there is a dimension lacking in the book—a personal spirit of inquiry, or of involvement in the subject-matter. Essentially, we have here a presentation more than a study, synthesis more than analysis; but even so, as a work of reference it has much substance and authority, and I certainly welcome it.

I had hopes, though, of a full airing of the issue of cross-fostering of whooping cranes with sandhills, and this is promised for chapter 9 (page 194). There is no chapter 9, however, and a cursory statistical account of the experiment in chapter 5 does not explore the theory or explain the practice. For readers to know how the real rarities are doing, the book is of course inevitably out of date, and Johnsgard’s hint of gloom about the recent productivity of whoopers is already dispelled (*Oryx* 18, 110). I was sorry, incidentally,