

Book Reviews

The World of the Wolf by **Russell J. Rutter** and **Douglas H. Pimlott**. Lippincott, New York, \$5.95.

The Caribou by **J. P. Kelsall**. Canadian Wildlife Service, \$3.50.

Fascinating is a word the responsible reviewer eschews, but I am using it because it is the proper word for this first book. Here are two naturalists, one of them a professor of ecology, working in conservation of wildlife in the provincial parks and wild northern areas of Ontario, where for ten years there has been more intensive work on the ecology and behaviour of the wolf than has been done anywhere else. The book is scientifically sound, yet the enthusiasm of the authors for this historic enemy of man breaks through on almost every page, thank goodness. They not only survived the hazard of their collaboration in this book, but were not cut into collops by those hideous fangs and all that. It seems certain that such exceedingly rare authenticated instances of wolves attacking man involved rabid animals. But even a ground squirrel can do that to you. This book must surely do much to make people take a new and sympathetic interest in this delightful animal which few will ever see in the wild. Nevertheless the authors say reluctantly that in general it is not a good idea to make a house pet of a wolf.

A wolf pent up generates energy which might be explosive. When the authors took some of their animals to a television studio, the wolves needed time to examine everything and caper around before settling down for the show like good little dogs. I remember once asking Bob Rausch in Alaska to let his two-year-old wolf loose in a large enclosure so that I could have a game of rough and tough with him. The wolf and I charged and wrestled with each other for a quarter of an hour: it was glorious, fangs did not tear but incisors nibbled significantly, at first making blue weals on my arms. The game continued to be boisterous, but I felt the teeth less painfully as that pent up energy was expended and only the friendly animal was playing with me. He never lost his sense of fun.

I hope sincerely that this book will be bought in this country as a present for boys and girls of all ages from eight to eighty; the many photographs are superb in interpreting lupine expression and beauty of form.

A lot of excellent wildlife research is coming out of Canada these days. This 340-page monograph on the caribou, with numerous maps and illustrations (at an extraordinarily reasonable price), is definite and represents years of arduous work in tough conditions over an enormous area of country.

The detailed ecology of the barren-ground caribou of northern Canada is described, also the migrations about this vast habitat of 750,000 square miles. The caribou are rarely still, and as we read of the movements here, northward in spring in search of food, aggregating and milling in the misery of the northern fly season till they are nigh exhausted; then, a respite and rapid gain in condition in later August and early September; the move south to the lichen ranges of the taiga and the grip of winter, one feels that these are harassed creatures.

The natural hazards are not all. It seems that man has reduced the herds more than any other factor. It is an intricate story: careful estimates by Banfield and Kelsall put the early population until after 1700 AD at something between 1.75 million and 2.4 million animals. Then came the great fur-trading era. Eskimos and Indians came into something more than a subsistence economy; there were European trappers as well, and later prospectors. The primitive Eskimos and Indians had very few dogs, but the fur trade justified the luxury of large teams and all the prestige they carried. The main diet of the dogs came to be caribou, so easily got with the aid of firearms.

The tale is well established in this book that, given firearms, Eskimos and Indians seem unable to think in terms of conserving caribou. There is wild berserk killing at river crossings by people unable to believe the numbers are not infinite and unknowing that over northern Canada the numbers of men are increasing. The nadir seems to have been 1958, since when numbers have increased from the 200,000 level. The operation of a caribou cycle of numbers has not been overlooked, but it cannot be verified. Suffice it to say that numbers having got so low, human predation has been much less severe. The human factor has not been just the killing but the careless burning of winter lichen ranges as well. All this could be brought under virtual control if education and an ethos of conservation grew. The greater money income in the north could also deflect pressure on the caribou.

Kelsall has all these factors well in mind, and as decline in the caribou has left a 9/10ths void in the niche structure, a prudent policy of tundra land use will concern itself with rehabilitation of the herds. Canada, through its Banfields, Kelsalls and their colleagues, is doing a positive job by the barren-ground caribou, and the world conservation movement is grateful.

F. FRASER DARLING

The Roe Deer of Cranborne Chase by Richard Prior. OUP, 50s.

This book describes the study and management of roe deer in the Forestry Commission woodlands at Cranborne Chase, in Dorset, from 1962 to 1966. The first half is largely concerned with an account of the deer's ecology and behaviour; the second is principally devoted to management and procedures for the collection of essential data. There is an appendix on parasites and diseases in roe by A. MacDiarmid.

It is always difficult to avoid clichés in reviewing books. The phrase which comes most readily for this one is 'wealth of practical information'. Observations on movement, rutting behaviour, fawning, and roe calling are described in considerable detail. Guidance on ageing animals by their appearance, the differentiation of antler shapes, and the seasonal arrangements of culling operations are among numerous subjects which should interest both the professional and the amateur deer watcher. At the end, I was almost prepared to accept that, with practice, unmarked roebucks can be readily recognised as individuals.

The author has a tendency to consider each facet of a problem in isolation; he presents his evidence, discusses it and draws his conclusions before moving on to the next topic. Where conclusions on interrelated subjects are not entirely complementary, as, for example, in the chapter on territory, this system leads to confusion. In these circumstances, a more conventional presentation, involving one discussion and a set of conclusions at the end of the chapter, would have been preferable.

My second complaint is that the quality of this carefully reasoned treatise is too frequently impaired by conjecture. For example, does Cranborne Chase (or any other roe deer habitat in Great Britain) ever reach the stage when it can be claimed that 'the natural food is nearly exhausted' (p. 16)? Is it 'obvious', or even likely, that the velvet on fully developed antlers causes roebuck intense irritation (p. 109)? The reader cannot be expected to accept claims that plantation fencing to exclude roe is too expensive to be considered as a preventive measure (p. 158) or that uncontrolled damage to young trees is invariably serious (numerous comments) without some supporting evidence.

It would be quite unjust, however, to end this review on a critical note. The book is very informative, very readable, and is certainly recommended.

C. W. HOLLOWAY