Zoo and Wild Animal Medicine, edited by **Murray Fowler** W.B. Saunders, Philadelphia, £41.75.

It is inevitable for a book of this size, scope and quality that a large number of authors have been involved in its production. This has ensured that the subject matter has been well researched, sifted and summarised. Dr Fowler and his co-editors are to be congratulated on its compilation, which has been some five years in the making. Although this branch of veterinary science is a fairly young one, it is remarkable how far it has come in the last 15 years, and the book reflects these advances and the degree to which other applied biologists have contributed to the mass of useful data now available.

Following brief introductory chapters on basic husbandry and preventive medicine, the book is divided into three major sections: reptiles with amphibia, birds, and mammals. The birds and mammals chapters each deal with a family or group of families, and the same format is followed in each one, so that, for example, biological data, such as body weights and measurements, haematology, sedation details and vaccination recommendations are easy to find. Reptilia and Amphibia are dealt with more on a systematic basis which in comparison makes data on a particular species or family rather more difficult to collect together. Some contributions are much more detailed than others. In a few instances this situation could have been improved by the author, but more frequently it simply indicates some of the gaps in our knowledge which have yet to be filled.

Undoubtedly, the book will become the 'bible' particularly of the many veterinary surgeons who have limited access to regular publications on the subject and need a work of ready reference on the surgery shelf. But it will not only be of interest to the veterinary profession; the wealth of general physiological data, much of it from previously unpublished sources, will also make it invaluable to research workers in related fields of biology.

D.M. JONES

Nature in Cities: The natural environment in the design and development of urban green space, edited by **Ian C. Laurie.** Wiley, £17.50.

Our expectations are aroused in the preface of this 420-page illustrated book by its emphasis on international concern for understanding natural processes within the urban environment, and for the possibility of towns being rebuilt with a more fundamentally natural character. The introduction follows up with the statement that 'ecological concepts can penetrate into the work and policies of urban landscape planners', but as we plough through the ensuing 16 under-edited and disjointed contributions from five countries we have a growing sense of an opportunity missed.

The book is marshalled under five headings — the 'philosophic' and the ecological context, natural history in cities, natural character in urban spaces, and landscape planning and management. Of the 23 listed contributors, 15 are described as landscape architects or planners, five as ecologists and the others as specialists in various biological fields. This bias is aggravated by the fact that the five ecologists provide only two of the contributions between them, and that these are confined to somewhat detailed, although valuable, descriptions of specific work in Berlin and around The Hague.

It is encouraging to know that landscape architects and park planners, who have hitherto done so little to prevent, and so much to further, destruction of the ecosystems encroached upon by our towns, are now eager to demonstrate that they have seen the light. The whole concept and execution of the work leaves us, however, in doubt whether the essential understanding of ecological concepts, and above all of urban ecological problems, has really begun to be attained. Apart from the stimulating but inevitably limited Berlin contribution already mentioned, the other two items in The Ecological

Context are both from landscape architects. One is a specialised climatic article and the other an ephemerally methodological treatment of an 'especially unique' part of San Francisco Bay. (The climatic prognosis, incidentally, is based without discussion on 'an energy requirement increasing at a rate of 4 per cent per annum' which 'cannot fail in the long term to have effects on climate'.)

Bare mention is made of such landmarks in urban ecology as the Cook County Preserves of Chicago, and no recognition is shown of the immense research effort which will be needed before urban nature conservation and open space management can anywhere near match the scientific basis now available for nature reserves and open spaces in the countryside. Our towns and our technology have set problems of adaptation for the biosphere of which we remain in almost total ignorance. Complacency in underrating the fundamental challenge of urban ecology can only lead to disillusionment. Despite its considerable merits at a relatively superficial applied level it is on that ground that this book qualifies for no more than a reserved welcome.

E.M. NICHOLSON

Life on Earth, by **David Attenborough.** Collins & BBC, £7.95.

Although based on the highly-acclaimed television series of the same name, this book must surely stand in its own right as the most outstanding account of Evolution published in recent years. In thirteen chapters, corresponding to the instalments of the programmes, the whole animal kingdom, from Protista to Man, is surveyed in lucid detail in the attractive, easy-flowing style in which the author presented the series, free of technical terms and understandable to intelligent children — a superb example of communication at its best. The text is enlivened by personal and telling observations of this most travelled author: filming for the series entailed one and a half million miles of travel and took three years. To read at first-hand how a young hoatzin in the swamps of Guyana or Venezuela clambers through the branches of a tree using the two little claws that it still possesses on the front edge of each wing, makes it easier to see how the first birds such as Archaeopteryx moved through the branches of its dinosaur-haunted forests. The problem of finding a mate in a colony of uniformly plumaged birds is well illustrated in the charming account of the male penguin picking up a pebble and solemly laying it before a bird standing alone. If he gets an outraged peck he knows he has made a dreadful mistake — this is another male. If his offering is met with total indifference, he has found a female who is either not yet ready to mate or is already paired. 'But if the stranger receives the pebble with a deep bow then he has discovered his true mate. He bows back and the two stretch up their necks and trumpet a celebratory chorus'.

Viewers of the programmes will recall the incident when David Attenborough was allowed to sit with a gorilla family — a sequence which seemed somewhat incongruous at the time, since man had not intruded on the unfolding story of evolution so far. But in the book, the author stresses what a moving experience this was, confirming that 'they are in so many ways so like us'. Provided that one is introduced and behaves in a proper fashion, one is accepted. The etiquette of observing the same gestural language must be observed. 'A stare is rude or, put in a less anthropocentric way, threatening — a challenge that invites reprisal. Keeping the head low and the eyes down is a way of expressing submission and friendliness'. What a pity earlier naturalists did not approach these close relatives in this way instead of making much of their aggressiveness and nearly wiping them off the face of the earth!

The illustrations are outstanding: 117 whole-page or double-spread colour photographs by many photographers, apposite and usually opposite to the text, which makes reference so much easier. The whole production of the volume is a credit to the publishers, designers and picture-researchers as well as to the author.

JOHN CLEGG