

REVIEWS

CONSERVATION IN THE CARIBBEAN. A Review of Literature on the Destruction and Conservation of Renewable Natural Resources in the Caribbean Area, with reference to the Population Problem. By J. H. WESTERMANN.

Doctor Westermann in the above review has presented a very clear and concise, yet comprehensive, picture of the problems of conservation in the Caribbean area. This review, obviously compiled only after an exhaustive study of his subject, should prove of considerable value to all agriculturists, economists, and social workers interested in the region. One mild criticism is that the work would have been of even more value had it been presented in two parts—one covering the island territories and one covering the mainland territories. In the island territories there is a consistent background of exploitation and denudation over the past few centuries, resulting in present-day land-hunger and over-population. On the mainland the picture is very different—a picture of undeveloped resources and under-population. There are in fact two completely opposite sets of problems requiring solution.

Chapter I is mainly based on a table giving a comprehensive statement of area and population statistics for the various territories. From these figures, an illuminating analysis of the correlation between land resources and population densities is given. In order to complete this picture a similar correlation between the original fertility factors and the present-day standard of living factors in the various territories would have been very desirable.

In Chapter II, the writer presents a most depressing account of the destruction of natural assets over the years in the island territories. Such terms as "soil erosion menace", "intensive deforestation", "land deterioration" and "declining fertility" are all too frequent and in most cases are probably understatements. In most territories, the Governments concerned are now aware of the situation and are making some efforts to remedy the existing position; unfortunately it is obvious that on the whole such efforts are on a very restricted scale and in some instances amount to "lip service" only. Doctor Westermann avoids the trap of attempting to lay down any overall solution of these problems.

It is an accepted maxim that an increasing standard of living is inconsistent with a falling standard of soil fertility. Doctor Westermann recognizes this fact when commenting on the

problem of population control measures. The advocates of population control say it can only be done by improving the standard of living; to effect these improved standards it is therefore first necessary to arrest the decline in soil fertility by the introduction of improved agriculture and better husbandry. Whilst emphasizing the heavy expenditure this latter work will introduce, Doctor Westermann gives rural education a very high place in the reconstruction programme.

The warning contained in this review is well summed up in the author's own version of Oliver Goldsmith's well known lines of poetry :

“ Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey

“ Where people still accumulate, and soil and men decay.”

E. W. M.

Note.—This book is Publication No. 7 of the Foundation for Scientific Research in Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles, c/o Zoological Laboratory of the State University, 8 Janskerkhof, Utrecht, Holland. Price 4 florins. Payment can be arranged through purchasers' banks.

SOUTH AFRICAN BIRDS OF PREY

BIRDS OF THE GAUNTLET. By H. VON MICHAËLIS. Hutchinson.
£4 4s.

I suppose that *Birds of the Gauntlet* is a justifiable title, for much of this book is about birds which can be used in falconry ; but it is not a book about falconry and this should, I think, be made known. Falconers are few and Mr. von Michaëlis' book will appeal to a far larger public.

The first part is really a series of studies of bird personalities, including owls, eagles and kites, but there is a chapter about a swan and an excellent one concerned with Archibald the Terrible, an Egyptian gander. Each bird is considered as an individual, not as a representative of a species. Many were taken as nestlings and there is some information which will be useful to those trying to rear young falcons—but let him who attempts this beware, for even such an expert as von Michaëlis admits to many a failure. Once he touches upon the ethics of plundering a nest but confesses that his feeling of guilt is soon quelled by the joy of possession.

Besides being a naturalist the author is a glider pilot and this has enabled him to give us fine descriptions of soaring flight and of the thermal air currents which make it possible. Often have I admired a towering cumulus without realizing that it was “ a mountain sprung into life, its sides boiling over into whirling