

Book reviews

books available at present, there is a 12-page chapter-by-chapter bibliography.

It is with the chapter on 'man and bats' that I have particular complaint. This includes a section entitled 'Bats and public health', which discusses the bacterial, viral, fungal and invertebrate associations with bats and has very little to do with humans—it is a fascinating aspect of bat biology often omitted from bat books, but one which belongs outside the scope of this chapter. In attempting to justify its place here the authors have suggested possible links with human health which are often, at best, misleading. This is not good for a book that purports to give a more realistic image than the one bats have suffered for so long.

Bat workers will find faults, as with any book, but they will find this a valuable reference work.

A.M. Hutson, Bat Conservation Officer, FFPS.

The Lives of Bats

W. Schober

Croom Helm, London, 1984, £13.95 (Available from FFPS)

Over the past few years there has been a great increase in interest in bats, especially amongst members of County Trusts for Nature Conservation and of national conservation and wildlife societies. This is fortunate, since bats are still regarded with horror by many people and an army of bat ambassadors is needed to educate the public as to the true nature of these useful and fascinating creatures.

One problem that those interested in the Chiroptera have faced is the shortage of available books on the subject. Schober's account admirably helps to fill this gap.

Covering topics ranging from the probable evolutionary development of bats, through their feeding and breeding habits to the threats currently facing these animals and possible conservation steps it provides a most useful introduction to these flying mammals. Despite the fact that bats are hard to study, a great deal has been published on them in scientific journals, so to find only 48 references at the end of the book is a little disappointing.

Most of the photographs are good, but the shot of

the serotine in flight suggests that the open mouth, typical of an echo-locating bat, can be seen. This is certainly not the case. Some of the other flight shots are not up to the standard we have come to expect in wildlife photography nowadays.

But these are minor faults—this book should be required reading for all Bat Group members and for anyone who comes into contact with these much misunderstood animals.

Henry Arnold, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology

The Fauna of the Hortobagy National Park Vols 1 and 2, and The Flora of the Hortobagy National Park

Editor-in-Chief, Z. Kasab

Budapest, 1981

Obtainable for £25.00, £25.00 and £12.50 respectively from Collets, Denington Estate, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 2QT, UK, plus postage—say £1.50

These volumes comprise a series of papers, 48 in volume 1 totalling about 400 pages, 46 in volume 2 totalling about 500 pages and eight papers in volume 3 totalling about 175 pages. Almost all of the papers are faunistic treatments with lists of species being dominant. The paper on birds (pp. 391–407 in volume 1) is the only one the present reviewer feels competent to comment upon.

The 215 bird species known to have occurred are biologically grouped by freshwater, grassland and woodland habitats, each subdivided by finer vegetational subdivisions in the case of the 106 nesters. The 109 transients are separately listed.

Jeffrey Boswall

The Mammals of the Southern African Subregion

H.N. Reay Smithers

University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa, 1983, R100

In outline based on the author's former works on the mammals of several southern African countries, the present book has to be considered as a masterpiece, admirable for the enormous mass of information collected. It fills a long-felt gap for anybody working with the mammalian fauna of southern Africa. With gloom one reflects that not more is known about many of the listed

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mammals. Fully aware of this, Reay Smithers, in his preface, is too modest about his awareness of the book's unbalance, when treating the different species, especially since some of them are hardly known and a few of them are on the verge of extinction. We are grateful that Reay Smithers has painstakingly collected so much.

After some explanatory notes there follows a glossary of terms used. This was obviously intended for a lay readership: terms like lateral, lingual, mandible, and pollex could have been avoided, but it is suspected that a serious scholar like Reay Smithers respected the wish of some editor. For each mammal family is given the colloquial name, taxonomic notes, description, distribution, habitat, habits, food, and reproduction. From the Carnivora onwards a paragraph is also devoted to the skull, which certainly would have been worthwhile too in other, especially the lower, families.

Taxonomically, the book is based on the identification manual edited by Meester and Setzer (1971–1974) with its unavoidable shortcomings, based itself on older sources or partly on museum specimens only.

The maps are of excellent quality, very often extending beyond the frame of the thematically limited range of the Southern African Subregion, but providing all the more information. However, excursions to the mammals of other continents seem to be unnecessary; for example the comparison with Asian elephants.

It would have been useful, perhaps, to have mentioned the local names of the mammals in the different native languages. On the other hand, some detailed and very specialised items seem to be superfluous in this overall survey, for example the percentage of species of birds or reptiles in the stomachs of African wild cat.

I regret that my reverence to Reay Smithers cannot be extended to the artists: the colour plates by Clare Abbott are certainly not the full colour emphasised in the foreword, but restrict themselves to a few colours ranging from yellow to several shades of brown to the artist's pencil stroke. Thus, the colour plates express an artistic, but often unnatural view, not exactly the goal of a book of empirical natural history. I believe that to be able to describe an animal, one has to know

and to love or at least to esteem it. Reay Smithers obviously does, the artist may still have to learn this. Ms Abbott's black-and-white drawings are excellent, however. Many other black-and-white drawings are, unfortunately, by other artists, ranging from interesting sketches to clumsy and often crooked results.

The credit for this book goes to the Mammal Research Institute of Pretoria University by assigning this enormous task to a man like Reay H.N. Smithers. May it raise interest and protection for a wonderful subregion and fauna!

Dr Walter Poduschka

Chairman of IUCN/SSC Insectivore Specialist Group

The Kew Magazine

The Kew Magazine, launched in 1984, replaces *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, and while retaining the tradition of publishing fine colour plates and descriptions of choice plants in cultivation it extends its scope considerably. The new publication aims to reflect the progress in the botany and culture of plants all over the world and contains articles on the conservation and ecology of plants in the wild and in cultivation.

Delving into the first two issues, I found a wealth of interest. A strikingly bizarre orchid *Paphiopedilum sanderianum* is featured; it was first discovered in 1885, but only recently rediscovered in Borneo where its location is kept secret to diminish the chances of commercial collectors finding it. It is now in cultivation at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. Other plants brought into cultivation recently are described and illustrated: *Aechmea abbreviata* (Bromeliaceae), was collected from Ecuador in 1981 in a sterile state and donated to Kew, where it has since flowered; *Dimorphanthera kempteriana* (Ericaceae), a large evergreen liana from New Guinea, which, despite doubts about whether it would be easy to cultivate, has been successfully grown for the last eight years at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh; and *Trimezia sincorana* (Iridaceae), with attractive clear-yellow flowers, from Brazil. This last species grows in acid sandstone country in a climate of extremes and its rhizome is used locally to make a nutritive and slightly purgative meal for children.