

and thrills. Having read chapters on myths and folk-lore, "tall" stories, eye-witness accounts, and exciting adventures like the rescue of mambas and cobras during the Operation Noah project at Kariba, one is brought to sober and chilling reality with an account of snake venoms and their effects. There is also a chapter on the career of "Bwana Byoka" or "Snake Man", C. J. P. Ionides, perhaps the greatest snake-catcher of them all. Fully half is devoted to a very useful list of snakes found in East, Central, and South Africa, giving descriptions, feeding, distribution, etc., which should prove a valuable field-guide to anyone who may encounter the much maligned serpent. One thing seems certain—it will never deliberately attack you. Even so, many readers will probably close this book with the comment that all "snake men" must be mad, which is perhaps the highest compliment they could wish for.

ALFRED LEUTSCHER.

THE REPTILES. By ARCHIE CARR. Time Inc., New York. \$4.60.

There is very little to say about this book beyond "unreservedly recommended". The text is excellently written and profusely illustrated, mostly in colour, and one wonders how it can be done for the equivalent of thirty shillings. It is just the kind of book to give a teen-age zoologist for whom the standard textbooks are too advanced and the popular works too superficial. But Professor Carr writes a gloomy story, despite its excellence. In his closing section, *Twilight of the Reptiles*, he writes with such fatality that one can only be left with the feeling that "they had a good time while it lasted" without much hope for the future. Is it too much to hope that such conservation measures as are in existence have not come too late?

J. I. MENZIES.

WILD LIVES OF AFRICA. By JULIETTE HUXLEY. Collins. 30s.

This is a most enjoyable and well illustrated book, written attractively and with originality. Juliette's natural gift of self-expression is to be envied. A lover of wildlife and a keen observer, she is above all an enthusiastic conservationist, so no opportunity is lost of pleading the cause of the welfare of Africa's wild creatures. *Ex Africa semper aliquid novi* is a hackneyed phrase which should long ago have become meaningless, but the author shows how wrong one can be.

The theme is a thirteen-weeks' journey of some thousands of miles, from the Cape to the borders of the Sudan, at incredibly high pressure, by land, water, and air when Juliette accompanied her husband—who has written an "Introduction" and a "Postscript"—on his visits to more than three dozen National Parks and Nature Reserves to study conservation on behalf of UNESCO. The mere contemplation of such an arduous programme would make many a younger heart quail. What was accomplished in so short a time is almost miraculous. Who could better the vivid description of the dying baobab: "In times of drought also, the wise but destructive elephants excavate them with tusk and trunk until the trees hang disembowelled and broken-hearted: they die that way, going limp all over like wet stuffing." Those familiar with the baobab and with elephant damage will recognize the touch of a master hand in this graphic portrayal of the soggy, pulp-like mess to which the great pachyderms can reduce these once mighty trees. Juliette laments "a bath of kipper-smelling water"; she was lucky, for the reviewer (and his wife) have often had to *drink* this! One senses an imp of mischief prompting the description of "Julian . . . his hair at several angles, like a

humanized secretary bird". In a book so comprehensive some factual errors may perhaps be unavoidable, but it is a pity that the excellent photograph facing page 65 should refer to "two sables—a fine male and a female with smaller horns and a paler coat", for the "female" is actually a roan antelope. There can be no better testimony than to conclude with the sentiment "More please, Juliette".

C. R. S. PITMAN.

THROW OUT TWO HANDS. By ANTHONY SMITH. Allen and Unwin. 30s.

The author of this remarkable book is not a conservationist in the sense that he has written any reports or spoken at any technical meetings on the subject. He is a professional writer with a passionate interest in animals and lighter-than-air craft. By combining both interests in a series of balloon trips across sections of East Africa and elsewhere, he has obtained a bird's-eye view of the whole sorry problem of land mismanagement. His description of herds of wildebeest on the move across the plains of the Serengeti are memorable, and he writes objectively of the built-in migratory instinct of certain animals. The numerous colour photographs are of a very high quality and along with the sheer adventure of ballooning, he relates carefully what a layman can both see and learn about the conservation of wildlife. In his lucid, unaffected style of writing, the author has given us a book based on personal experience and with a most unusual viewpoint. In short, he has *done* something beyond making the usual grand tour of the gamelands by Land-Rover. The book is unreservedly recommended.

JOHN HILLABY.

FORKS AND HOPE. By ELSPETH HUXLEY. Chatto and Windus. 30s.

In this timely book by one well versed in her subject, Elspeth Huxley writes, with her usual sense of style, a narrative packed with fact. It is mainly a searching analysis of East African politics, politicians, and ways of life as affected by the "wind of change", its impact and its implications and less than one-third is devoted to wildlife. For someone born and bred in Kenya who was long a part of a country she loves, it must indeed have been difficult to write dispassionately, and poignant are the details of many of the far-reaching results of the scuttles from Africa. Surely there is a touch of genius in "While men create works of art, animals constitute them". She explains graphically and convincingly how first and foremost the preservation and development of the habitat is the basis of successful conservation. There can be nothing so disastrous as some forms of ecological change, whether caused by man, climate, or the wild animals themselves. How incredible is the intransigence of the Masai in their outlook towards their country. "It's our business how we treat it, not yours." Quite so, but having destroyed their own habitat, and this is imminent, they will have no country, and then they will inevitably over-run what has been reserved for the wild animals, to continue there the process of devastation.

The concept of the sacrosanct National Park has always been bedevilled by the prospect of overstocking by some of the larger species such as elephants, buffaloes, and hippos and she refers to what is being done or what might be done to combat this. Can there be justification for a Government-sponsored project "To exploit the human wish to slaughter animals" as an adjunct to conservation? Does not this conflict with the efforts to foster in local populations a better understanding of wildlife and its value? There is the amazing story of how abnormal, protracted rains induced the breeding of nine consecutive generations of the biting-fly *Stomoxys*, which multiplied