

The redeeming features of the book are the illustrations, which are excellent, and the artist is to be congratulated, but even they cannot make up for the inaccuracies. In its present form this a dreadful book and cannot be recommended.

J. M.

SNAKES OF NYASALAND. By R. C. H. SWEENEY. The Government Printer, Zomba, Nyasaland. 25s.

Here is a book of which the pattern might well be copied by other regional "zoologies". It caters for both amateur and professional and the contents are of a particularly high standard. There are introductory chapters on general topics, very necessary in a country where books on reptile biology are not readily available, but these do not take up more than one-seventh of the total and the bulk is properly devoted to the accounts of the snakes themselves. The systematic part is especially good as it contains such a large proportion of ecology and general natural history of the snakes rather than simple descriptions.

There are two keys, one for laboratory use and the other a field guide which may be used by laymen, provided they realize that it is not infallible. The reviewer tested it with some West African examples of Nyasaland snakes and found it worked reasonably well, although the shape of the pupil could not easily be determined unless the snake was in hand. To the best of the reviewer's knowledge this is the first book on tropical African reptiles that has included a field guide at all.

Nevertheless there are a few general points that could be mentioned. The continued reference to species by number only is annoying, as it means constant use of the index and the author's reference to the distribution of snakes outside Nyasaland is not always correct. Many species are referred to as occurring as far west as Ghana—the author apparently does not realize that Ghana is at the extreme eastern end of the Guinea forest block and the many forest snakes occurring there extend right through that forest as far west as Sierra Leone and Guinea. Nor has he heard of the authentic record of a 32 ft. python from the Ivory Coast which makes this species the longest, and not the third longest, snake in the world.

There are a few photographs at the end but these are quite the poorest feature of the book, their quality being far surpassed by the line drawings of a number of the species described. There is also a map but this does not show physical features beyond lakes and rivers. This is a pity, for there is a special section on montane snakes so both contours and an indication of vegetation zones would have been useful.

But let me not detract from the value of the book by listing criticisms. It is excellent value for 25s. and the reviewer wishes that there were a similar one written for his particular corner of Africa.

J. I. M.

SURVIVAL OF THE FREE. Edited by Dr. WOLFGANG ENGELHARDT. Translated from the German by JOHN COOMBES. Hamish Hamilton. 30s.

This is a collection of articles, many by famous naturalists, ruined by literal translation from the German.

Here we meet some really astonishing creatures—the tiger horse (presumably Zebra), fighting snipe (Ruff), the silken heron, the crawl-stork, the roaring ape (Howler monkey), and other extraordinary victims of the translator. But can we blame translation for the five sub-species of rhinoceros,

calling the hyrax a member of a large family of rodents and picturing a ground-squirrel, calling the huemul—which is an Andean deer—an antelope, etc. ? I must admit I enjoyed this book in a ghoulish sort of way, especially perhaps the roaring ape and the bit about the red deer which “if forests are too greatly reduced will go to the remotest place possible and finally vanish altogether”.

There is no index but the book is well got up with many beautiful photographs and there is useful information about national parks and reserves. Nevertheless it is a pity that it was ever put forward as a plea for the preservation of wild life.

C. L. B.

WILD ANIMALS OF THE WORLD. By T. L. C. TOMKINS. Illustrated by REIN STURMAN. Blandford Press. 15s.

The blurb of the dust cover says that this is the ideal book for the general reader and for the student wanting an accurate reference. It is in fact a pocket book describing some typical animals of the world, each with an illustration and two or three hundred words of text. It takes the world by continents, giving examples of the mammals of each in turn. Unfortunately the Animal Kingdom does not fit into this structure. The lion is not mentioned under Asia; under Africa, is said to be practically extinct in Asia—in fact the lion is carefully preserved in the Gir Forest in India. The grey seal, whose principal breeding places are around the British Isles, comes under “the Americas and the Arctic”. The wolverine comes under Europe but “ranges eastwards into northern Asia”—no mention of its equally important Canadian habitat.

The introduction to Asia says that forest-dwelling ungulates are not numerous as to species, the Cervidae being represented only by the Sambar, the Chevrotains, and Muntjacs. There are many other Cervidae in Asia—Chital and hog deer, for instance. We are told that Grevy's zebra comes from Southern Africa. It really comes from Northern Kenya, Somaliland, and Ethiopia.

The illustrations are variable, some good, but a squirrel illustrates the bushy-tailed murkat (a mongoose); the water vole is illustrated by a shrew.

C. L. B.

TREETOPS HOTEL. By E. SHERBROOKE WALKER. Robert Hale. 18s.

I approached this book with trepidation, fearing that it would be either just a boost for the author's well-known wild life look-out hotel in Kenya, or reminiscences. It is neither. It is an unaffected story of how a simple man fulfils the hard task which he has set himself. Unreservedly recommended.

C. L. B.