

estimates of how much of their own preferred cod and other prey are eaten by all those thousands of seals. It is no good telling them that there is no convincing evidence that seals, and for that matter other marine mammals, influence the abundance of fish stocks. They know that seals eat fish and that is enough. So while I would recommend them to read Nigel Bonner on the subject, I fear that the truth will go in at one eye and out at the other.

*Richard Fitter, Vice-President, FFPS.*

**Snakeman: The Story of a Naturalist**

*Zai Whitaker*

The India Magazine Books, Business India Group, 18th Floor, Nirmal, Nariman Point, Bombay 400021, India, 1989, 185 pp, HB Rs 195.00 (or \$US15.00 including registered airmail postage)

Rom Whitaker's life-long involvement with reptiles makes a fascinating story, well told by his wife Zai and decorated by the delightful black-and-white illustrations of Bruce Peck. The tale begins in New York State, where Rom was born and where his interest in snakes began, describes his schooldays in India, where he kept snakes under his bed, and follows his early career in Miami Serpenterium.

The bulk of the book, though, describes his important work in India, where he has lived for 20 years. Among his most notable achievements have been the establishment of the Snake Park and the Crocodile Bank in Madras, fine examples of education and conservation practice, and the setting up of the Irula Snake-Catchers' Co-operative, a

model of sustainable wildlife utilization.

This is a heartening account of how an enthusiastic and dedicated man with few financial resources can achieve inspired yet sound conservation. It is a very personal story but this only adds to its interest; many well-known conservationists of the last two decades appear in its pages and there are interesting reflections on how attitudes to conservation, even within the international organizations, have evolved over that time. It will appeal to anyone interested in conservation, its practitioners, reptiles or in India itself.

*Editor.*

**African Mammals 1938–1988**

*W. F. H. Ansell*

The Trendrine Press, Zennor, St Ives, Cornwall, UK, 1989, 77pp., SB £10.60 including postage in the UK or £10.90 by overseas surface mail (air-mail price on request)

Since 1939, when G. M. Allen's *A Checklist of African Mammals* was published, there has been a great expansion of African mammalogy and many new taxa have been described and named. *African Mammals 1938–1988* is an essential complement to Allen's work, listing names published from July 1938 to 31 December 1988, with reference list and index.

*Editor.*

**A Field Guide to British Bats**

*Frank Greenaway and A. M. Hutson*

Bruce Coleman Books, Uxbridge, Middlesex, 1990, 52 pp., HB £10.99

In recent years bat study has

moved out of the Dark Ages as interest has blossomed throughout the British Isles.

After decades of handbooks and general mammal guides we have reached the age of the field identification guides for bats. This latest guide consists of a superb collection of colour photographs of all our native bats photographed from all angles so that important identification features can be seen. Opposite each plate is a comprehensive text, highlighting identification details and providing useful information about roosting sites, habits and distribution. Although no new identification features have been described this guide has the advantage over others in the variety of photographs of each species so we can, at last, try to see for ourselves all those features peculiar to each bat species.

Frank Greenaway's original photographs were of excellent quality but this, unfortunately, has been lost to some extent both in crispness of the reproduction and in layout in this book. It has been many years since I have seen photographs cut out and set out in plates in this fashion (odd thumbs, tail tips and goodness knows what else have been chopped off). Nevertheless bat fanatics will still buy this useful guide.

Some of the photographs remain unadulterated and they should attract those with only minor interests in bats as they are first class. The final moan—the price. At £10.99 this is perhaps rather pricey for the 52 pages. Doubtless the hard cover is partly to blame. Personally, I would have found it much easier to slip into a pocket if a paperback version had been available. It is a field guide when all is said and done.

*Phil Richardson.*