

Book Reviews

The Spotted Sphinx, by Joy Adamson. Collins, 45s.

An Artist in Africa, by David Shepherd. Collins, 75s.

The White Impala, by Norman Carr. Collins, 36s.

African wild life continues to attract the attention of a diversity of conservationists. Joy Adamson enjoys a long period of research on the breeding habits and cub life of the cheetah in Kenya; David Shepherd commits to canvas notable examples of Africa's mammalian fauna; while Norman Carr records principally the objects and hazards of the control of destructive and dangerous creatures in Zambia.

Alloof, shy and inscrutable, the cheetah has never before been seriously studied in the wild, and here it is only the behaviour of an orphaned female cub and its progeny, not of any adult males that is recorded. Brought up in captivity, Pippa was gradually rehabilitated to a wild state, a process very considerably retarded by four pregnancies from mating with a wild male. Meticulous daily observations were made insofar as possible, constituting a reliable and unique study of great interest and considerable value. The superb illustrations, of exceptional beauty, are a striking testimony to Joy Adamson's intimate relationship with her protégées. One marvels at her inexhaustible patience in the face of incredible difficulties and all manner of adversities, so vividly described. Her observations of the cubs concern creatures which, inherently wild, have been brought up in almost daily contact with human beings, relying on them for their sustenance and welfare, some still being fed and expecting to be fed when as much as eighteen months old. Both mother and cubs were subjected to such a variety of medicines and drugs that their natural resistance to the normal ailments of the wild must have been seriously impaired, if not entirely suppressed, but this is a criticism of method rather than of achievement, which admittedly is astonishing. A follow-up of the fortunes of those cubs is surely indicated.

It is hard to believe that David Shepherd, a dedicated wild life conservationist and exceptional animal artist, has only been painting animals since 1962. Obviously in the closest sympathy with his four-footed subjects, he is an artist with a difference making them really live. His backgrounds too provide an astonishing wealth of detail—particles of dust floating in the air, the myriad components of thicket or broken branches, intricacies of light and shade, the earthy discoloration on elephants or the bright reflection on the wet hide of a hippopotamus. There are 32 full-page beautiful pictures, each with an indication of the dimensions of the original painting, as well as a number of smaller sketches. All are excellent; outstanding are:—'Rhino Country'—wonderfully balanced; 'Old George under his Favourite Baobab Tree'—of prehistoric aspect and a striking comparison of puny elephant with a gigantic baobab; 'Trouble Ahead'—an enraged tusker glistening with red dust; and the shagginess of a waterbuck's coat clearly depicted in an indefinable way unlikely to have been previously attempted. The buffalo quartets are magnificent, each animal different in posture, seeming so threatening though actually just inquisitive.

Norman Carr's story, primarily that of a hunter, is to a great extent concerned with killing, much of it certainly on official duty in connection

with the control of destructive and dangerous species. During his long years of service with the Northern Rhodesia Game Department there have been great changes in the countryside—for instance the creation of Lake Kariba—and in game distribution, and he has become an enthusiastic conservationist closely associated with the establishment of sanctuaries. Vividly described are the amazing wildlife resources of what is now Zambia, as well as the development of the renowned Luangwa Valley nature reserve, but he warns of the perils of animal over-population and the mistaken creed of 'leave it to nature'. He is emphatic that 'habitat is the key to any wild life sanctuary and protection is no substitute'; effective wildlife management, instead of wasteful control, necessitates carefully planned, profitable culling. Illustrations are in black-and-white, and the title is taken from a strange rarity—an albino impala.

C. R. S. PITMAN

Badgers at my Window, by Phil Drabble. Pelham Books, 30s.

Wild Hares, by Henry Tegner. John Baker, 30s.

This detailed account of the behaviour of tame badgers living under essentially the same conditions as wild ones will be widely read and give the badger's image favourable publicity. The author's suggestions for practical legislation to conserve badgers involve giving them legal protection coupled with licences to deal with the occasional rogue.

The badger's unsuitability as a pet led Phil Drabble to vow he would never keep another, and when three more were wished on him he resolved it must be under near natural conditions with full liberty. An artificial set near the house and extensive wild country in all directions made this possible, and they remained so tame that their behaviour could be closely observed and carefully recorded. (Even under these ideal conditions one was very nearly killed by a wild badger.) An electrical recording device showed that from time to time during the night they were liable to return and spend a considerable time at their home, (as Graham Moysey reported in 1959), when they would engage in digging or gathering bedding, and also 'just messing about'. He has himself accompanied his tame badgers on their nocturnal foraging expeditions and watched them searching for worms, beetles and slugs (especially the big black ones).

Henry Tegner is a naturalist sportsman who has brought together a wide variety of information about hares in a very readable form. The hare is a beast of the chase which was hunted with hounds by Xenophon in the fourth century B.C., and today several packs of beagles hunt hares with the followers on foot. At coursing meetings two greyhounds are slipped at each hare and the dog which does most towards catching the hare is given the highest number of points.

In considering why hares should be partial to aerodromes, the author wonders if the droning of the planes in some way resembles the drumming noise hares make with their forepaws. In the introduction he says he can trace only one book, published in 1896, exclusively devoted to the hare. He has overlooked the splendid little book *Mountain Hares* by Hewson and Watson published in 1963 in the *Animals in Britain* Series.

Both books are well illustrated; two unusual photos show a badger and a hare swimming.

H. G. HURRELL