

references in small print are clearly a contribution in their own right.

To anyone wanting a potted version of Schaller's *The Serengeti Lion*, reviewed in the last *Oryx*, coupled with a superbly photographed account, I can recommend this book. In it Schaller captures the mood of the big predators through the lens of the camera, sharing with us the day-to-day moments of rest, play, love-making, conflict and above all the hunt. His often full-page photographs are superb eye-witness accounts. So close up and rich in colour are they that one can almost feel a part of the scene, whether it be a lioness drowsily suckling her young, or crouched half hidden, as an isolated zebra looks and listens in the direction of impending danger. As Schaller says, much of the book is about death, and I cannot help feeling repugnance at photographs of hyenas chewing their way into a wildebeest before it has fallen. But a predator's whole existence revolves around the quest for food, and for the author to avoid the squeamish sides of these innocent killers would be to paint a false picture. The text is informal, blending general impressions with personal details, and highly readable.

PAUL JOSLIN

From the Roof of Africa, by Clive Nicol. Hodder & Stoughton, £2.75.

In the wake of Leslie Brown, John Blower and Peter Hay, militant campaigners for the establishment of a national park in Ethiopia's Simien Mountains, Clive Nicol takes up the cudgels in the fight to preserve this unique area and its wildlife. His book is a laconic account of the part he played as a game warden in this fight, a role for which, with his physical and mental toughness, he was well equipped. His assignment is to establish a national park, and ensure the protection of the walia ibex. Gazing at the Simien scenery he reflects that 'the walia and the cliffs, the birds, plants, streams and all living things are part of a pattern that is unique, a pattern that must be kept and nurtured and perhaps eventually understood.'

But it is a pattern which is rapidly breaking down. Local tribes are cutting and burning the walia habitat to clear the land for ploughing. Over the years they have been forced to plough higher and higher, leaving behind massive erosion, destroying both the environment and their livelihood in their ignorance. For good measure they are illegally shooting the walia which could be a means of living for them—as a tourist attraction. The game guards have no true understanding of what a park is, or of the meaning of conservation, and no appreciation of natural beauty. They feel no indignation at the sight of a forest fire. Arrests are made without enthusiasm; offenders are released, and someone is richer by a sheep. And a senior guard, who has much influence with the local tribes, is positively opposed to the park.

For two years, hampered by inefficiency, apathy, ignorance and frank opposition, Nicol strives to impose order in the park. He finally admits defeat when he catches the game guards themselves cutting down trees.

His book is primarily concerned with conservation, greatly enlivened by a strong element of adventure. He is a thorough-going tough guy, and his writing is terse, blunt and unsentimental.

ROSEMARY SMITH

Catch Me a Colobus, by Gerald Durrell. Collins, £1.60.

With an overdraft of some £30,000, perhaps most of us would look for a dark corner in which to retire gracefully from the world. Not Gerry Durrell. He knows that his Jersey Zoo is important, because he sees it as a blood-bank for endangered species. And with his powerful charm he sets up the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and painlessly extracts enough money from his supporters to keep the bankers at bay.

The first part of this book deals with the establishment of the Trust, with everyday life at Jersey Zoo, and the continuing drama of keeping captive animals content and fruitful; the second with a hilarious expedition (all Durrell expeditions are genuinely hilarious, it must be very thirsty work) to the 'beef mines' of Sierra Leone. After warning his assistants to expect a rough passage and spiders in the jungle hammocks, reality invariably consists of a Hollywood-style flat or luxury mountain-ranch lent by some convenient mogul friend. What a family connexion the man has! Closely pursued by an intrepid BBC film unit, they capture a group of colobus monkeys in the flesh and for the telly.

And lastly he describes his first attempt to collect the rare volcano rabbit, from the environs of Mexico City, with the object of establishing a breeding nucleus at Jersey. But wouldn't the rabbits' cause be better served by leaving them at home, and by using that fearsome energy to persuade others to do the same? Perhaps not yet. And few people do more sterling work in convincing the world's unconservationists that animals matter, and that they need sympathetic consideration.

It is a good read, in characteristic style. The chapter headings are extracts from his fan mail, expertly chosen and very funny. He couldn't possibly have written them himself, could he? No, no, he's an honest man, things happen all around him, and he is excellent company.

TONY SOPER

The Mammals of Africa—an Identification Manual, edited by J. Meester and H. W. Setzer. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington. Fascicle One with binder, \$8; complete, \$25.

When complete, this work will consist of fifteen parts with eighteen subparts, introduction, conclusion and index, covering all the mammal species and 'valid' subspecies known in continental Africa, the offshore islands, including Madagascar, and coastal seas. As such it will provide an up-to-date checklist for the whole African area, the most recent work having been that of Allen, 1939, which could be accused of being too uncritical of the validity of many named forms. Twenty-three authors are involved. What has now been published is the introduction and five of the parts, covering the five mammalian orders of Chiroptera, Cetacea, Pinnipedia, Hyracoidea and Sirenia, and is the work of seven of the authors.

In general form, each part has many common features. First there are keys to the sub-orders (if any), and to the families which occur in Africa. Within each family is a key to the genera and within each genus a key to the species. Each species entry has a note on the distribution, a list of subspecies giving geographical location, and, where it was felt necessary, a note on the taxonomy. Each part ends with a list of references and other relevant literature.

These keys are based for the most part on characters readily discernible from an external examination. In some cases it would be difficult to identify the characters unless the animal were dead, or at least immobilised, but in general it should not be too difficult to use the keys to identify living animals.

If it is understood that, as the title indicates, the manual is an aid to the distinguishing of one African mammal from other African mammals, it will be a most useful work. Like all regional identification keys it must not be taken to have universal significance.

As a checklist it has a much wider significance and represents the most up to date views of a number of acknowledged experts on Africa's mammalian fauna. One of the paradoxes of African zoology is that while each area has been well studied, very few attempts have been made to treat the whole continent in single comprehensive works of reference.