

Galapagos penguins, the tool-using cactus finch and the land iguana, three endemic Galapagos species photographed by Roger Perry, formerly Director of the Charles Darwin Research Station, and author of *The Galapagos Islands*

country where the increasing pressure of human numbers imposes the utmost difficulty on setting aside even the smallest tract of land for wildlife, a reserve such as Tiger Haven, small though it is, can be invaluable. Arjan Singh's sanctuary contains not only tigers and leopards, but also the largest surviving population of barasingha deer in India—about 1200 animals. Throughout Asia, only the Sukia Phanta reserve in western Nepal can today match this total. For this reason alone it is to be hoped that his book will help to gain for his initiative the recognition it deserves.

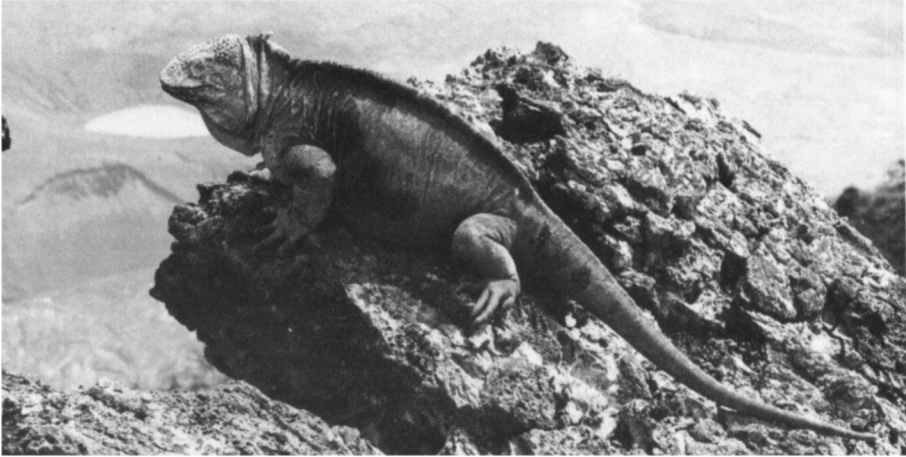
GUY MOUNTFORT

Conservation for Survival, by Kai Curry-Lindahl. Gollancz, £3.25.

The author has assembled an enormous number of ecological facts to support his central theme that, 'since we ourselves are biological organisms dependent on the natural environment', we must end our senseless destruction of the life support systems of nature. The impact of our activities on the air, the sea, fresh water, soil, vegetation, animals, and ultimately on ourselves makes it clear that the warnings of environmentalists over the past few years have not been fanciful. The pollution caused by carbon monoxide from automobiles is by now well documented, but it is disturbing to find that the take-off of a single Boeing 707 has the same pollution effect as 6850 accelerating Volkswagens.

Pollution of the environment upsets the working of nature in quite unpredictable ways, and herein lies its greatest danger. The destruction by the crown of thorns starfish *Acanthaster planci* of coral islands in the Pacific has aroused worldwide concern. The productivity of these coral reefs is responsible for several food chains in the oceans. It has been suggested that dredging and blasting of areas around the coral reefs has killed off the predators which prevented a population explosion of these starfish. The author feels that the discovery of these starfish in polluted areas near Port Sudan may be a pointer to the connection between pollution and the unchecked increase of the starfish.

Kai Curry-Lindahl has always insisted that wild animals are much better adapted to thrive on marginal lands than cattle. Millions of years of evolution has ensured that wild species fit perfectly into ecological niches where they live. Many antelopes for example, require hardly any water; they start to breed when they are less than a year old, which, coupled with a short gestation period, makes them extremely productive; their metabolism is such that they convert vegetation into meat most effectively. The problem,



a short but comprehensive and interesting account of the islands' wildlife aimed at young people, and profusely illustrated with the author's photographs (Dodd, Mead & Co, \$4.00).

of course, has been to make it possible for large populations of wild animals to exist near human habitations. The Russians have succeeded in building up large populations of the saiga antelope in the region between the Volga and the Urals where the human population is 'four times as dense as in Asia'. In India the blackbuck *Antilope cervicapra* has been largely exterminated because of its conflict with agricultural interests extending into marginal areas. It would be worthwhile returning marginal lands to wildlife, and restraining humanity from colonising unsuitable habitats.

One of the great problems of the world is the maldistribution of water in terms of both space and time. Floods alternate with droughts with alarming frequency. To the layman the creation of large dams appears to be a sensible solution, but the ecological disasters which have flowed from the Aswan Dam, for example, suggest that smaller irrigation schemes which do not alter the balance of nature so radically are a preferable alternative.

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

Les mammifères de France et du Benelux, by M.-C. Saint Girons. Doin, Paris, frs 138.00.

The French have a long tradition of interest in the study of mammals, but from the days of Buffon and Cuvier onwards exotic species have tended to attract attention at the expense of the native fauna. In recent years however the name of Madame Marie-Charlotte Saint Girons has become familiar to readers of the technical literature as the author of numerous papers on the ecology and taxonomy of mammals in France, based on studies carried out at the Ecological Laboratory of the National Museum of Natural History. It is particularly pleasing therefore to have a book dealing with all the non-marine mammals of France from such an experienced author.

Each species is illustrated by a simple line drawing or a photograph (but the photograph purporting to be of harvest mouse appears to be a wood mouse) and drawings of the skull. The text is concise but comprehensive, drawing extensively on recent work, taxonomic and ecological, from all parts of Europe. Particularly valuable are the distribution maps, given for all but the ubiquitous species. Some rather strange patterns emerge. The map for European mink is a cumulative one, including records presumably dating back to the beginning of the century, but even then it appears to have been confined to the western part of the country, widely separated from its main stronghold in Eastern Europe. The species appears to have inclined