

embarking on so comprehensive and ambitious a book. I do not doubt that its sequel, a companion book on the animals of the Antarctic and Subantarctic, announced on the dust-jacket, will be an entirely different proposition, for it is in the south that the author's most notable polar experience has been gained. Very little of the present book except the lively prose owes its origin to Stonehouse. Even selecting agency pictures of places and things one has never seen and giving them captions is asking for trouble; compiling a popular scientific text in similar circumstances is perilous indeed. The book consequently has little depth and is sometimes factually adrift. If like the Humane Mikado one could make the punishment fit the crime, the author would be sent to arctic Siberia (alternatively the District of Franklin) for a summer or two, with hard ecological labour.

V.C. WYNNE EDWARDS

The Struggle for the Great Barrier Reef, by Patricia Clare. Collins, £2.50.

Refreshingly different from the recent deluge of books about various aspects of the Reef, this is neither a picture book nor an account of reef life, but an account of the Reef's future. Until recently no one has questioned this and little scientific attention has been given to this enormous and extremely complex ecosystem with incredible species diversity.

Miss Clare has woven a fascinating story, and her skilful descriptions of the people most intimately involved make whole sections read like a novel. Other chapters describe her visits to the Reef and the threats from mining and oil interests, increasing coastal development, oil tankers, uncontrolled tourism etc. She gives a wide insight into the problems currently to be faced on this assemblage of reefs extending 1250 miles along Australia's eastern seaboard, and leaves the reader with a feeling of considerable disquiet as to its future and the way in which decisions are arrived at.

Of the fifteen colour photographs, many of them extremely good, ten are by Keith Gillett, the doyen of Reef photographers. Since a whole chapter early in the book is devoted to the crown-of-thorns-starfish threat to the Reef it is unfortunate that plate 1, captioned 'Crown-of-thorns starfish' shows a common reef sea urchin. All the captions are terse and most uninformative. For instance the caption for plate 4 – a superbly reproduced photograph of the fringing vegetation at Heron Island – is merely, 'Trees and beach – Heron Island'. Apart from the fact that this much is obvious, identification of the trees as casuarinas would at least be informative. But these comments do not detract from the text; I hope that it will be widely read, both inside and outside Australia.

ROBERT BUSTARD

The House of Life – Rachel Carson at Work, by Paul Brooks. Houghton Mifflin, \$8.95.

Rachel Carson was a bestselling author, with books translated into a score of languages, long before she published *Silent Spring*, her last and best known work. An aquatic biologist, she wrote mostly about the sea and the shore and their teeming life, skillfully mingling scientific knowledge with her sense of wonder at the endless beauties of nature; and she wrote well.

This is largely an anthology, giving copious extracts from all periods of her writing, linked together by Paul Brooks's account of her quiet life and slow development from unpublished poet to international celebrity. Consequently it is only the last third of the book that deals with the controversial *Silent Spring*, on which she worked for four years. Not by temperament a crusader, she certainly never dreamed that a tract on pesticides would become a bestseller, but she felt impelled to challenge the indiscriminate use of synthetic poisons. Her target was not only the vested interests but also the general ignorance and complacency of the time.

Silent Spring made an explosive impact and aroused perhaps the greatest storm in conservation history. She was savagely criticised: *Time* reported that informed opinion considered her case 'unfair, one-sided and hysterically over-emphatic'; the trade journals were less polite. But her book brought a new awareness to millions of readers and infiltrated the minds of millions more who never read it or even knew her name. Some of her shots may have gone wide of the mark, but the ten years since its appearance have seen some remarkable changes in attitudes towards nature and our environment. David Brower summed up her effectiveness in a single sentence: 'She did her homework, she minded her English, and she cared'.

G.T. CORLEY SMITH

Animal Aggression: Selected Readings, edited by Charles H. Southwick. Van Nostrand Reinhold, £3.

Animal Weapons, by Philip Street. MacGibbon and Kee, £1.95.

In his preface Professor Southwick mentions two persistent controversies in the study of aggressive behaviour: firstly, whether animals have an instinct for aggression or whether it is always the product of external stimulation; and, secondly, whether we can, in fact, learn much about human behaviour by studying animals. The present wave of violence in our society makes both these subjects of more than academic interest and these writings by leading authorities in the study of aggressive behaviour provide a wealth of information, not readily available to non-specialists, for intelligent contemplation and discussion.

In addition to the classic studies of behaviourists such as Konrad Lorenz and Niko Tinbergen, the twenty contributions include recent papers in the fields of physiology, endocrinology, biochemistry and neurology. It becomes clear, after reading these, that the causes of aggressive behaviour even in animals are exceedingly complex and in man more so, particularly because it is more socially organised. We are left with the conclusion, apparently reached by Professor Southwick, that the relevance of animal studies to human problems are, to say the least, hard to define in our present state of knowledge.

Mr Street deals with the tools of aggression but also includes mention of structures that do not come within the strict definition of weapons, such as the protective cases of caddis larvae, and behaviour such as the burrowing activities of many creatures. Occasionally the author seems to get carried away by his enthusiasm into subjects right outside the scope of his title, including biological control, commensalism and life histories. The real weapons discussed in an entertaining way include horns, teeth and feet, shells, spines, suckers, projectiles including the incredible sling of the bolas spider, lures and traps, blood-sucking devices, stings and electric organs. There are numerous helpful line drawings by Megan di Girolamo.

JOHN CLEGG