

Webb's chapter "The Rape of the Forests" gives a graphic picture of the devastation caused by ignorance and faulty land use in the wonderful indigenous forests of eastern Australia, and an enthralling chapter on "The Decline of the Plants" by J. S. Turner gives an excellent exposition of a great heritage and the dangers that assail it. Ian D. Hiscock, writing on "The Shores and the Shallows," not only gives a clear picture of the amazing marine life of the Great Barrier Reef and the Australian coast, but of the destruction which is endangering much that is irreplaceable.

The authors of these two well written books face these problems squarely; they agree that a solution can only be reached by education, research, and legislation. Sanctuaries, in every type of terrain, and in every variation of climate must be declared, and policed. If immediate action is taken much can still be saved; delay will be disastrous. Australia covers a vast area. Naturalists are few, and it may well be that there will be many exciting and happy surprises in store. The famous ornithologist Alec Chisholm recently stated that in spite of the tremendous destruction that has taken place, there is no evidence at all to indicate that any one kind of bird on the continent (excluding the islands) has definitely become extinct since settlement began nearly two hundred years ago. In fact during recent years fifty new birds have been added to the country's roll call, fifteen of them since 1960. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the marsupials; ten forms have become extinct—all but one since 1900—and no fewer than 32 are currently regarded as in danger of extinction. Both books should be read by every Australian citizen, young and old, but they are also of great interest to nature lovers throughout the world.

HENRY ABEL SMITH

The Primates, by Sarel Eimerl and Irvn De Vore. Time-Life International, 32s. 6d.

The Time-Life nature books form one of the best "popular wildlife series" so far published, each with an informative and easily readable text married to excellent photographs; the latest one about primates will not be a disappointment.

The book covers a great deal of ground, from defining what is a primate to the ways in which primatological studies are throwing some light on to our own evolution and behaviour. De Vore is well known for his field studies of baboons, and the results of his own work have been heavily drawn upon without appearing too obtrusive. However, it is perhaps a shame that some of the more recent investigations by V. and F. Reynolds, and Jane Goodall, on chimpanzees could not have figured more prominently in the book, and the virtual omission of the classic investigations by Carpenter on howler monkeys, together with the studies on the Japanese macaques, are perhaps puzzling. But any such criticism is by the way; no-one can fail to learn something from this book and many will no doubt finally close it with a greater appreciation of their own evolutionary and behavioural roots.

Conservation is not dealt with in any detail, although there are several photographs of caged orang-utans, of rhesus monkeys being used for medical research, and of the celebrated Ham, the first chimp in space. If apes or macaques look pitiful in the sterile surroundings of the research laboratory, how magnificent they are in their natural haunts, and the majority of the 153 photographs are a feast for the primate-lover's eyes.

JOHN SPARKS