

where the old Sitka spruce can be felled and got to a ship headed for Japan in double-quick time. The island streams have become drains for the muck. Bears are naturally growing fewer though a moderate trophy-hunting of bears on Admiralty Island in the past has been no inconsiderable help to the economy of south-east Alaska.

We were brought up to think of grizzly bears, brown bears, tundra bears, and so on. Now we know that they are all one species inclined to racial and environmental differences. Bears living on salmon on the Alaskan Peninsula look different and behave differently from the grizzlies of the Brooks Range, but it does seem they are all brown bears. Bears are not animals with which to trifle, but this does not mean they are a constant danger to the wandering naturalist in Alaska. Rather are they a constant exercise to our intelligence as observers of animal behaviour. I admit to having been extremely circumspect pushing my way through alder thickets in which there is fresh bear sign because bears do not like sudden disturbance. You can watch them and relax at close quarters if they are fishing for salmon in the rapids of some river, for you are removed from their orbit. A bear disturbed when he is eating meat—possibly your own cache—is very dangerous. Just give him best. Few animals can give you more interesting or amusing watching than these big bears. Frank Dufresne conveys it all so well.

Rachel Horne's drawings in this book are a delight. She too must have watched the animals.

F. FRASER DARLING

### **Mice All Over, by Peter Crowcroft. Foulis, 25s.**

As Dr. Crowcroft remarks in his opening chapter, 'Most popular books about animals are not about animals at all. They are about people.' The distinguishing thing about his book is that, for once, the animal comes first, even if it is only the humble house mouse. Books reporting serious researches about animals and written in a style that everybody can understand, are few. All the more, therefore, should this one be welcomed because it does that rare thing—tells a simple tale about animals and at the same time gives a report of solid and well-designed research.

Mankind has been troubled for centuries by the house mouse which has spread throughout the world from its original home on the Asiatic steppes. Since it is a specialist in exploiting seed crops, it is not surprising that it has followed agricultural man's footsteps. Serious scientific attention was not paid to its commensal activities until the Second World War when stores of grain, whether in the rick or in sacks under the roof of a Ministry of Food 'buffer depot,' became so precious that the tithe taken by the house mouse was regarded as intolerable.

Researches into the natural history and population of this enterprising pilferer showed that the main problem in reducing their numbers was to arrive at an understanding of their home ranges and social organisations. Some time after the war, but while food stocks were still zealously guarded, Dr. Crowcroft was charged, as a member of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with gaining basic ecological information about house mice which would render their control feasible. His adventures, physical and intellectual, are told in this book.

Prospective readers should not be misled by the popular title nor by the generally light-hearted style of writing. The tale is told well, in direct and trenchant language, but it is also a good tale scientifically and traces

**THE  
RUSSIAN  
DESMAN**

Plate 15: A close-up showing the desman's long, flat snout which is very sensitive to smells. When swimming the desman can remain almost invisible by protruding just the pair of nostrils at the tip of the snout out of the water and submerging again

*Photographs by H. Kykcoba*

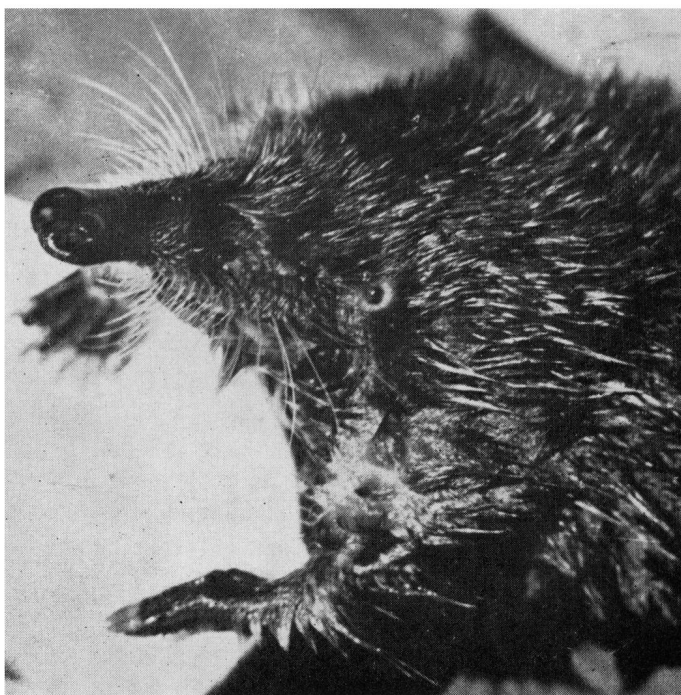


Plate 16: The desman is a valuable fur-bearing animal of Russian rivers which is seriously affected by the introduced musk-rat as described in the article on page 54. Eight to ten inches long, it has a sideways-flattened tail about the same length as its body, which it uses as a rudder





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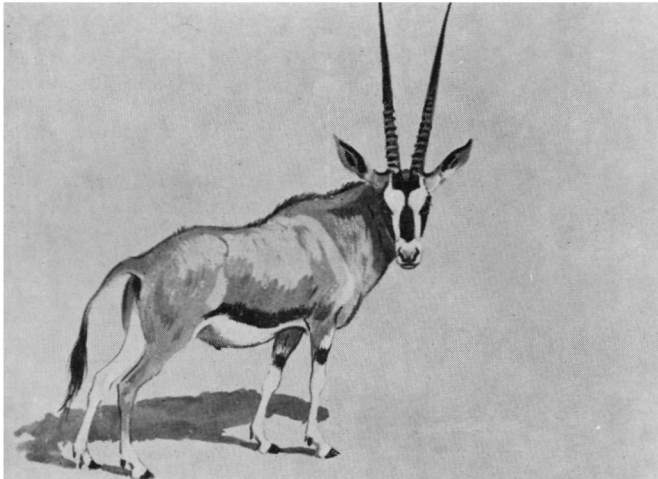
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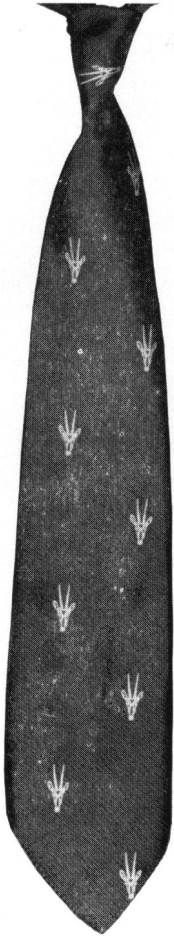


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a carefully thought-out approach to understanding, by observation and experiment, the world of the mouse and the ways in which the mouse organises his world.

One of the most interesting aspects of this work is the way in which various individual mice emerged as personalities, so that the reader's feelings cannot help but be engaged, as were those of the writer, by the life and death problems faced by a mouse in a hostile universe. However, in spite of this, the account never ceases to be objective, which is the reason why this book can be so warmly recommended.

H. N. SOUTHERN

**The Tuatara, Lizards and Frogs of New Zealand, by Richard Sharell.** Collins, 30s.

The first book on the reptiles and amphibians of New Zealand, this is a useful guide for both professional and amateur naturalist. Well written and illustrated with over 50 colour photographs, the majority by the author, it contains a wealth of scientific detail which is easily understood by the layman, and much of it the result of the author's own experience in the field. The chapters on lizards and frogs, in which each specimen has its own paragraph dealing with colouration and habitat, etc., are very useful for identification.

Of particular interest to me were the two chapters on the tuatara, the lizard-like reptile that has remained virtually unchanged for the last two hundred million years, because I have been in charge of the only true pair of tuataras outside New Zealand; these are in the Jersey Zoo. In an interesting account of his stay on Stephen's Island, one of the twenty small islands off the coast of New Zealand which are the last stronghold of the tuatara, the author describes the habitat, feeding habits and even the hatching of the clutch of tuatara eggs. A short chapter describing the part played by reptiles in the legend and art of the Maori is most welcome—a very important aspect seldom mentioned in natural history books.

JOHN HARTLEY

**The Snow Bunting, by Desmond Nethersole-Thompson,** Oliver & Boyd, 45s.

Of biologists as well as economists and politicians it can be said that some know more and more about less and less, while others know less and less about more and more. As one of the latter category myself, I salute Desmond Nethersole-Thompson as a distinguished member of the former. He has devoted the greater part of his life to intensive study of a small number of breeding birds in one part of the Scottish Highlands. The fruits of this study appeared first in his *New Naturalist* monograph on the greenshank, and now in this thorough and detailed study of the life history and biology of the snow bunting. His subject is something of a mystery bird in the British avifauna; its exact breeding status has never been quite clear, for few ornithologists have been prepared to ascend the highest Scottish mountains year after year to check on its presence. The author and his son Brock are among those few, and they have come to the conclusion that Scottish snow-bunting breeding colonies are temporary affairs reflecting climatic conditions both in the Highlands and elsewhere. On the whole snow buntings are less likely to nest or attempt to nest in