

framework is soundly based on a wide review of the literature backed by a comprehensive bibliography and index. There are 45 tables and 52 photographic plates ending with a sad picture of a dancing bear.

JULIET CLUTTON-BROCK

East African Mammals, An Atlas of Evolution in Africa, Volume III, Part A Carnivores, by Jonathan Kingdon. Academic Press, £30.

This is the fourth of a sextet on the Mammals of East Africa. It is written by a zoologist, who has grown up from boyhood in East Africa, who has learnt much of his zoology in the field unencumbered by much of the dogma of the lecture theatre, who has an eye for landscape, its history and the way it functions, and who can control not only his pen to produce words of value but his pencil to produce illustrations of even greater value and charm. The six volumes will cover the structure, function, history and setting of the mammalian fauna of East Africa. It may be many a long year before another brain capable of doing this has the chance to emerge. East Africa, as the author has pointed out, is not a biological entity but a political one (at least it was a single entity until recently), nevertheless an analysis of East African fauna has a significant bearing on understanding the fauna of the whole of Africa south of the Sahara, except of the very densest part of the Congo Basin.

When I reviewed the first of these volumes, I was critical of some of the author's technique. I do not withdraw that criticism in the sense that, had I been the author, I wouldn't have done it in the same way. What I do say now is that I couldn't have done it and Jonathan Kingdon has, and that what we are dealing with is as much the expression of one man's genius as would be a great painting. There will be many places where differences of interpretation can exist, where points have been missed and where some of us might raise our eyebrows. I have come to the conclusion that I would be helping neither prospective buyers and readers nor the author to draw their attention to such things. The value of these books is to read them, a chapter at a time, and take in the mammals in the context the author is describing.

Suffice it to say that the book leads us into the carnivores of the region with a discussion of the Miacid descent to the Viverrids, Hyaenids and Felids in Africa and the entry into the region of Canids and Mustelids from the North, and an analysis of the niches occupied by the forty odd species which now occur in East Africa. He then leads us through the species, family by family, in the conventional order from *Canis* to *Acinonyx*, from Jackal to Cheetah. Every page is fascinating, drawing on the author's understanding of published work, amply supported by his own observations.

If you have the money, these books are well worth possessing.

MICHAEL R. BRAMBELL

Ants, by M.V. Brian. Collins, £5.95.

Perhaps because of their ubiquity, ants are often ignored by naturalists. They are, nevertheless, of tremendous ecological importance, for it is not only in the tropics that they move around astonishing amounts of organic material, such as seeds, dead and dying insects and other small animals. Dr Brian's book therefore fills an important gap in the popular literature on the natural history of British insects. It is firmly based on an ecological approach, but chapters on the structure and identification of British ants reflect the author's research interests, for he has spent most of his professional life studying heathland ant communities. He describes the habitat requirements of the forty-two British species and how they interact when competing for resources; his account of the