

REVIEWS

MAMMALS OF THE WORLD. By HANS HVASS, translated by GWYNNE VEVERS. Methuen. 16s.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MAMMALS. 21s.

MAMMALS OF THE WORLD. 3 guineas.

Both by FRANÇOIS BOURLIÈRE. Harrap.

LIVING MAMMALS OF THE WORLD. By IVAN T. SANDERSON. Hamish Hamilton. 3 guineas.

There are many good general works on birds, but very few, for some reason, on mammals. The English edition of Hans Hvass's book is therefore particularly welcome. There are several more advanced studies available at the present time, but, at its price and size, there is no general study to compete with the new volume. It refers to over 1,000 of the roughly 3,000 living species of mammals and more than 300 of them are illustrated in colour. Used as we are to-day to the increasing tendency to illustrate animal books with first-rate photographs, it comes as a shock, at first, to find that these 300 pictures are instead paintings by artist Wilhelm Eigener. It is only when one studies them closely that one realizes how accurate they are. It is not, however, the accuracy of precision, but rather the accuracy of portraiture. The nature of each species is captured perfectly and without distortion or artistic license. The text provides an excellent introduction to the great range and variety of mammalian species and the translation is more than a translation. In transferring the text to English, Gwynne Vevers has obviously modified and checked extensively the current names and terms and has given the volume an attractive authenticity.

The Hans Hvass volume does not, however, take one very far. It is an excellent first introduction to the subject, but where does one go for more detailed information? With this in mind, a survey of the general mammal literature reveals that there are three other recent volumes that can be strongly recommended, each taking the reader further and in particular directions. *The Natural History of Mammals*, by François Bourlière takes one further into the realm of mammalian behaviour, his *Mammals of the World* transports one around the world on a tour of mammalian ecology and zoogeography. *Living Mammals of the World*, by Ivan Sanderson takes one through the Class Mammalia, group by group, on a taxonomic survey. All three are first-rate and in their own special fields unrivalled at the present time. The natural history volume contains twenty-four black and white photographs and ninety-seven very good line drawings. It deals with such topics as feeding, territory, self-defence methods, breeding cycles, longevity, migrations, and so on. There is a valuable bibliography and index. The larger Bourlière volume arranges its species into chapters depending on the basic type of environment in which they are found. There are, for instance, chapters dealing with mammals of the tropical forests, the savannah, the desert, the prairies, the arctic, the mountains and the sea. The many black and white and coloured photographs are superb and the text reliable. This is probably the most rewarding general mammal volume for those interested in Fauna Preservation.

Attractive as it is, the Bourlière volume is nevertheless difficult to use as a reference work. The extensive index is liable to leave one frustrated if an attempt is made to use the book as a desk volume for checking facts about particular species. Each well-known animal has five to ten references and each will only produce a few words or a sentence. This is inevitable in a volume geared to geographical or ecological units. Happily, *The Living Mammals of the World*, by Sanderson, is available and can fill this gap with ease. Here the index leads one straight to a thumb-nail sketch of the animal and, usually, to a photograph as well. There is little to choose between this and the last volume as far as illustrations and presentation are concerned. Both have the same large format, the glossy quality, superb colour and black and white illustrations and detailed texts. As a general reference work, however, there is nothing in the class of the Sanderson volume in the English language at the present time.

Summing up the "general mammal book" situation, it can be said that, as an introduction, the Hvass book will serve well, but that, when more detail is needed, Bourlière can provide the natural history and the ecology, in his small and large books respectively, and Sanderson can provide the group-by-group reference work. All these volumes will amply repay bookshelf space.

D. M.

NATURE CONSERVATION IN WESTERN MALAYSIA, 1961. Published by the Malayan Nature Society, P.O. Box 750, Kuala Lumpur. Price (sterling), paper cover 12s. 6d., hard cover 17s. 6d.

This is the 21st anniversary number of the *Malayan Nature Journal*, a quarterly magazine, but this special number is not so much a magazine as a complete treatise on the conservation of animals, plants, soil, rivers, and rocks throughout Malaya and north Borneo. It is good reading, partly because its range is so wide but mainly, I think, because each writer is so obviously devoted to his subject. It stresses the importance of conserving all resources, especially in a country which is being rapidly opened up, and is addressed particularly to the rising generation of Malaysians, to make them aware of the extraordinary richness of their heritage. Over 100 schools in Malaya and Singapore now have their own nature societies, all members of the parent one.

The book is divided into four parts—General, Conservation and Environment, National Parks, Wild Life—and it ends with a glossary of Malay words, an index and three maps—one of South-East Asia, the others of Malaya and north Borneo. They show all the names mentioned in the text.

Space does not permit separate mention of the forty-five articles, but each is written by the person best qualified to do so and all are up to the standard one would expect from such contributors.

The editors, Wyatt-Smith and Wycherley, and all the others concerned, are to be congratulated on a splendid book; for letterpress, plates, maps and text-figures are all beyond praise and the advance planning and organization that made this possible are not the least