

Book Reviews

Wildlife Crisis, by HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and James Fisher. Hamish Hamilton £4.20.

Different people arrive at conviction of the need for conservation by different routes and this is nowhere better illustrated than by the way in which the authors of this important book approach the problem.

Prince Philip is a convert. In his frank and very personal apologia, he tells us that his boyhood was free from any 'bug-hunting' proclivities. It was travel and photography that aroused his interest in nature; then, taking a hard look at the threat to environment posed by the population explosion combined with the equally violent technological explosion, he saw the need for conservation on a scale commensurate with the danger. He has worked at it ever since. He fears that his motives are somewhat selfish because of his love of bird photography, although, with his advantages, he at least should be able to find wildernesses as long as he can click a shutter. His toughly argued essay is essentially a passionate plea to save this earth of ours for the generations to come. And he wants action, not talk.

The late James Fisher's approach was different. He was born in the faith. Nature was his world and moulded his life. His scholarly contribution is crammed with facts ranging from earliest prehistory to the latest Countryside Act. He brings his great learning to bear in a long historical dissertation on conservation in its broadest sense. This is followed by separate chapters dealing with the present wildlife situation in fifteen regions of the world. James Fisher left us a message of hope. 'As master of the earth', he wrote, 'man has shown himself capable of global lunacy, but capable too of high altruism'. With his vast knowledge of the problems of conservation, he had few illusions but he ended on the fighting note: 'We cannot afford to be pessimists'.

There is a most useful section on the extinct and endangered species and the book contains copious illustrations and maps.

G. T. CORLEY SMITH

The Flying Syringe, by A. M. Harthoorn. Bles, £3.50

The sub-title of this book, *Ten Years of Immobilising Wild Animals in Africa*, describes its subject; the main title indicates the treatment – popular, or, perhaps more accurately, not over-technical. The result is a very readable, interesting and well-illustrated account of a series of projects, most of which will have come to the notice of FPS members but which are here spelled out in detail as a consecutive story. As a bonus we get some idea of the hard graft – the trials and tribulations – of research, in this case research to find safe drugs and fool-proof techniques for immobilising a remarkable variety of animals in order to study or doctor them, or move them from one place to another.

The book starts off in the Semliki in Uganda, moves on to the translocation of the Lugari kob from Kenya to Tanzania, describes the Kariba problem and Operation Noah, discusses rhino relocation in South Africa and gives details of work on antelopes, lions, zebra, elephants and buffalo. There is a chapter on biotelemetry, another on 'The Purpose of it all', and one 'In Defence of Elephants' – particularly those in the Tsavo Park in Kenya.

Reviewing this book for another journal, I described it as 'notable for its clarity – and its humane and balanced approach'. Overall, this last is certainly true, but we all of us have our PPPs (People's Pet Places), about which we are never quite sane; the Tsavo is obviously one of Toni Harthoorn's, and here his judgment does not seem to be so sure. His own views on elephant reduction are stated clearly, but does he give the contrary arguments full weight? Perhaps we can judge this better after reading in the last ORYX (December 1970) Dr Laws's comments on Dr Glover's recent article on Tsavo. Dr Laws was the Director of the Tsavo Research Project to whom Dr Harthoorn refers, although not by name.

Postscript – What is it about Kenya – or possibly East Africa? – which causes so many head-on clashes between individuals? Why do not the scientists there get together more and discuss their work as it proceeds? Where this is done it is surprising how often a jointly held view emerges, and one on which the Administration can act. When the poor Admin. is faced with two completely conflicting arguments, things simply drift – or someone tosses a coin. Either way, not a very satisfactory outcome of research.

JOE EGGELING

An Eye for a Bird, by Eric Hosking with Frank W. Lane. Hutchinson, £3.25

First Catch your Tiger by Oliver Graham-Jones. Collins, £1.80.

These books tell the life-stories of two men dedicated in different ways to the study of wild animals, one in portraying them in nature and the other in caring for them in captivity; from both we learn not only about the authors but much about the animals – mainly birds in the first instance, primarily mammals in the other. Eric Hosking subtitles his 'the autobiography of a bird photographer', and it carries a foreword by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. It is, of course, richly illustrated with photographs of high quality, some in colour.

Everyone with any interest in birds knows Eric Hosking's photographs. Details of how the shots were taken are not here unduly stressed; rather it is the behaviour of the subjects that, properly, receives chief attention. Likewise, there is not too much technical information for the amateur, although one may follow the evolution of the equipment from a box camera, used (unsuccessfully!) at the age of eight, to the costly modern artillery of interchangeable lenses of ever greater dimensions and such devices as electronic flash. More interesting is the human story of how the youth set up in business, at first with bread-and-butter commissions to photograph weddings and children, but gradually specialising in nature work. The main task itself was trying enough, requiring long hours in the dark room; the author now has something like 200,000 pictures on file, apart from discards, and one of them is thought to have been reproduced on about 1000 occasions. The actual photography involved periods of arduous field work each year. It has also been dangerous at times, for the punning title refers to the early loss of an eye in a night encounter with a tawny owl. The author makes it abundantly clear, however, that he has been able to live the life that he most desired; and he pays deserved tribute to the support given by his wife, Dorothy.

Oliver Graham-Jones was the first whole-time resident veterinary officer at the London Zoo, and for some years concurrently Curator of