

Book reviews

concentrate on the larger, more spectacular species such as crocodiles etc., some of the smaller reptiles and amphibians will become extinct before they are listed.

There are three possible solutions to this problem. First, continue with the present appraisal, and accept that the more spectacular species will get more attention; second, develop a less detailed, but more comprehensive approach; third, develop an entirely new, perhaps ecosystem-oriented approach. Whichever of these strategies is adopted I believe that a radical examination of the concept of endangered species listings will be needed. At present, the RDBs are extremely comprehensive and presumably aimed at well-informed scientists — but are they the ideal target? Perhaps they should be aimed at journalists, politicians, lobbyists or the general public. Whichever groups are defined as being important, they should be clearly identified and the product designed to meet their requirements.

But none of the above is intended to denigrate the current RDBs in general or the first of the Herps. in particular; it is an invaluable document, highly recommended to all conservationists. It is also pleasing to note that the price is extremely modest for such an important work, of over 400 pages.

John A. Burton

NB, this volume is available from ffPS price £12.50 inc. surface postage.

Man and Fisheries on an Amazon Frontier

Michael Goulding

Developments in Hydrobiology 4

Dr W. Junk, The Hague, Dfl 90,

US \$47.50

Despite the rather high price for 137 pages, this book is an important one for all those concerned with economic development in the Amazon rain forest. Although the Amazon is the largest river system on earth, with by far the largest freshwater fish fauna, until recently the biology of the commercial fishes was little known. Mainly catfishes and characoids (with giant Arapaima, some cichlids and others), the large size of many of them and their long migrations through complex and relatively unexplored river systems has made

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them difficult to study. Goulding's own work has now brought out very clearly the intimate relationships between the fishes and the forest (see also his 1980 book *The Fishes and the Forest*, University of California Press). Many species are dependent on the flooded forest for food and sheltered nursery grounds, while certain fishes have important roles in dispersing tree seeds. This present book concentrates on the Rio Madeira, one of the main Amazon tributaries and itself one of the world's major rivers. After looking at the prevailing physical and biological conditions it gives a fascinating portrait of the opening up of the Madeira basin (with its railway to bypass rapids, initiated in the rubber boom, and later highway development) and the effects of this on protein flow and fishery development. Clear diagrams illustrate the fishing methods; numerous black and white photographs show the fishermen at work and the main food fishes. A section summarises what is known of the biology of each of these. Goulding concludes by examining the relative productivity of these fisheries, problems to be faced, and management possibilities. It is clear that the destruction of the Amazon floodplain forest will inevitably have profound effects on the commercial fishes.

R.H. Lowe-McConnell,

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Antarctic Wildlife

Photographs: Eric Hosking

Text: Bryan Sage

Croom Helm, £12.95

The Antarctic has long been a focus of attention for sealers, whalers, great explorers and scientists, but more recently it has had a new invader — the cruising tourist. Cost will probably prevent many of us from joining the tourists, but for a little less we can enjoy Eric Hosking and Bryan Sage's book on Antarctic wildlife which was born from Eric's invitation to join a tour on *Linblad Explorer*.

This is a pleasing book with many excellent photographs of the kind we would expect from an old master like Eric Hosking. Bryan Sage's text is competent and informative, if perhaps rather uninspired in places. There are chapters on the history of the area, general ecology of the land/ice areas, the ecology of birds and seals, and an

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