

## India's Wildlife and Wildlife Reserves

B. Seshadri

Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1986, 216 pp. 120 Rupees.

Mr Seshadri's second book has the avowed intention of providing a guide to the more important of India's wildlife sanctuaries. Along the way it has expanded to include a summary of the status of the major animals that inhabit the sub-continent. Clearly, Mr Seshadri could not resist the temptation to update his justifiably doom-ridden 1969 account of *The Twilight of India's Wildlife*. Thus the present book is divided into two halves: the wildlife and the reserves.

While all animals are equal for Mr Seshadri, some are clearly more equal than others. Thus tiger, rhinoceros, elephant, gaur, buffalo and the bears receive discursive essays, while reptiles, birds, hares and squirrels are dismissed in a paragraph or two. Perhaps this is inevitable, but it would have been good to hear more of the plight of the wild ass (11 lines) and of the splendid captive-breeding programme of the gharial (6 lines), though this reviewer knows only too well the limitations of space.

Taking one of his longer essays, we find that the author documents the population increase of the tiger without mentioning the recurrence of man-eating. He recommends Sankhala's book *Tiger!*, but relegates McDougal's *The Face of the Tiger* to the Bibliography, though it is the latter's emphasis on territoriality that best accounts for an increasing population becoming man-eaters.

On the reserves Mr Seshadri is equally selective in his treatment: only 36 of an Indian total of 223 are described. Most accounts lean heavily on historical material, mainly of hunters, and are thin on description of habitats and the wildlife to be expected. Under Ranthambor, for example, there is no mention that tigers can regularly be seen by day, making it comparable only with Kanha among Indian tiger reserves. On Bharatpur more space is devoted to shooting records than to present-day breeding birds—and this is one of the world's greatest bird reserves. One could continue. . . . but space. . . ! Each reserve has details of seasons, temperatures, altitude, accommodation and nearest airport or railhead to facilitate visiting. Frankly this is as

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disappointing as anything in the book. It is general and, to anyone who knows India, quite inadequate. The logistics of travelling in India and finding accommodation (even understanding what a 'dak bungalow' is) are daunting and this book will not help. Mr Seshadri even has the nerve to give addresses of the wardens following the imperative 'Write to'. Have you tried writing to India?

The idea is excellent and there is much useful information tucked away in these 216 pages that will be of benefit to the would-be watcher of Indian wildlife. Indeed, one can get a 'feel' of India and much is eminently readable, but it is not a guide that solves the traveller's problems, nor does it give an up-to-date account of India's wildlife.

John Gooders, ornithologist and author

## Exotic Intruders: The Introduction of Plants and Animals into New Zealand

Joan Druett

Heinemann, 1983, HB £5.95+£8.85 airmail postage from New Zealand, available from Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 22 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HH, UK.

Joan Druett's book is the first since G. M. Thomson's 1922 classic *The Naturalisation of Animals and Plants in New Zealand* to cover the entire subject, which brings it up to date. In addition to chapters on wild animals and plants, it also contains accounts of the introduction of domestic livestock and agricultural and horticultural varieties, brief histories of the Acclimatization Societies, and reports on how some alien animals and trees are currently being turned to economic advantage. Although aimed at the general rather than the scientific reader, this book makes a worthwhile contribution to the subject.

Christopher Lever

## The Field-Book of a Jungle-Wallah

Charles Hose

Oxford University Press, 1986. Originally published 1881. SB £4.95.

## The Head-Hunters of Borneo

Carl Bock

Oxford University Press, 1986. Originally published 1929. SB £6.95.

Having felt obliged, when I lived in Sarawak, to

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keep up to date with books about Borneo written by modern 'adventurers', I have come to the conclusion that what makes so much of modern Borneana maddening is that the authors never seem to stay long enough to gain any real understanding of the place, and they usually appear to be under the erroneous impression that they are pioneering new ground. How refreshing, then, that Oxford University Press has decided to reprint the works of two old 'Borneo hands' who really were pioneers! Carl Bock's *The Head-Hunters of Borneo* is in many ways the direct forerunner of the modern works, since it is the tale of a culturally arrogant European's adventurous wandering in Borneo and Sumatra, but written at a time when it really was rather original to do that sort of thing.

Bock's arrogant tendencies culminated for me in some hilarious diplomacy in which he does the local equivalent of a hypothetical, helpful Asian tourist making an Ulster Loyalist and an IRA leader hold hands while he tells them in broken English not to fight.

But Bock's volume is fascinating and well written. He took much new information to Europe, his illustrations are excellent, and he took the trouble to append species lists of molluscs and birds. He even managed to deliver several new species to Europe, in spite of the loss of 571 bird specimens in the Red Sea when a steamer sank.

I liked Bock's book, but I don't think I'd have much liked Bock himself. Charles Hose, on the other hand, comes across on every page as a fascinating, enthusiastic, but modest, raconteur. I suspect that many of his stories were first told over a gin-and-bitters, perhaps on some verandah in Kuching as the sun went down behind Gunung Serapi. I wish I'd been there. Even when he insults my adopted relatives, the Kelabits, it's possible to laugh.

Strangely, for such an eminent naturalist, Hose commits a few zoogeographical blunders—like placing the lion-tailed macaque in Sarawak—and as a source of biological information, he is best read critically. I kept Smythies' *Birds of Borneo*† and Payne, Francis and Phillipps' *Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo*\* to hand, both for cross-checking and for the maps that OUP foolishly fail to provide in Hose's book.

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Bock's and Hose's works are essential reading for anyone with an interest in the people or natural history of Borneo. Somehow, to present them in paperback does not do them justice, so I heartily recommend the hardback versions to be treasured in collector's libraries.

\*Payne, J., Francis, C. and Phillipps, K. 1985. *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo*. The Sabah Society, Kota Kinabalu.

†Smythies, B.E. 1981. *Birds of Borneo*. Third edition, revised by the Earl of Cranbrook. The Sabah Society with the Malayan Nature Society, Kota Kinabalu.

Michael Kavanagh, World Wildlife Fund Malaysia

## The Natural History of Orkney

R. J. Berry

Collins, New Naturalist Series, 1985, 304 pp, SB £9.95, HB £20

The Northern Isles of Scotland are very special for wildlife and scenery, enhanced by an exciting history and friendly people. The differences between Orkney and Shetland make a visit north even more interesting to the visiting naturalist. Professor Berry's new book on Orkney complements his earlier New Naturalist, *The Natural History of Shetland*, written with Laughton Johnston. He has had the benefit of a group of Orkney experts, some of whom have helped write specific chapters.

*The Natural History of Orkney* runs to 304 pages. The introductory chapter on the islands, weather and people is followed by detailed chapters on biological history, geology, habitats and vegetation. Most of Orkney's nearly 100 islands are very low-lying with impressive sandy beaches and strands, so a chapter on sea and shore followed by one on otters, seals and whales is very appropriate. It is also a land of freshwater lochs with excellent trout fishing and abundant wildfowl in winter. The terrestrial animals include two very special mammals—the Orkney vole and North Ronaldsay sheep.

The islands are very rewarding to the bird-watcher, with many interesting birds, including large seabird colonies and Orkney's special hen harriers, as well as excellent places to observe migrant birds. This subject is fully explored in chapter nine as well as in an up-to-date checklist

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