

# Book reviews

My only criticisms of this well-documented book are reserved for the publishers for producing such a lurid and inappropriate dust-jacket, for the poor quality of some of the monochrome illustrations, and for placing such a high price (even in this inflationary age) on a book of 224 pages.

The highest compliment I can pay Dr King is to say that I wish her thought-provoking book had been published in time for me to have read it before completing my own *Naturalized Mammals of the World*.

*Christopher Lever*

## **Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance**

Stephen Herrero

Winchester Press, New Jersey, 1985, 287 pp, \$14.95

When bears come close to humans, potentially harmful interactions become a problem—for the bears as much as for people. Particularly in certain American national parks, the 'bear problem' became acute during the 1970s, with large numbers of visitors regularly coming into bear country and many bears being positively attracted to key areas such as campsites and hiking trails. The bears began raiding camps and ripping open cars to get at food inside. There were also some gruesome and highly publicized human fatalities, often resulting from people startling bears (especially females with cubs) or crowding too close to them in order to feed or photograph them. Herrero describes his research into this developing problem of wildlife management and proposes some possible solutions. Keeping campsites scrupulously clean and proper disposal of refuse are obvious ways of not encouraging bears to become campsite scroungers, and perhaps should be mandatory anyway. Killing or deporting ursine camp followers is less desirable, especially in a national park. Stiff penalties for feeding bears by the roadside might help too—if people were persuaded to stop. However, seeing bears is one of the pleasures of visiting a national park; the difficulty is to control the behaviour of people towards them. One of Herrero's illustrations shows the hand-feeding of a wild bear, and I have seen holidaymakers posing their children beside a wild bison for a good family snapshot, and children playing beside a wild alligator. The so-called 'bear

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problem' is actually a people problem too. Herrero discusses both aspects and also shows how very different the grizzly and black bear are in their behaviour towards humans. This leads him to propose different strategies for us to follow if attacked. In one case you must be totally passive and play dead, in the other you should fight back: a tricky decision to make in the 1.5 seconds before a charging bear reaches you!

This is an interesting book, perhaps an important one for those who regularly hike and camp in North America. For a little while I was put off from doing either. Bear attacks are bad news, literally, and can generate disproportionate hysteria, but a sense of proportion should be retained; the chances of being killed by a bear, even in the most likely places, are less than one in a million. Being struck by lightning is far more likely. History shows that we can easily solve the bear problem by exterminating bears; peacefully coexisting with them is more difficult, but perhaps more appropriate, especially in national parks.

*Pat Morris, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London*

## **Galapagos: A Natural History Guide**

M.H. Jackson

University of Calgary Press, 1985, XIII+283 pp, US \$17.50 (outside Canada) + \$3.00 postage, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4

Also available from Bradt Publications, 41 Norcroft Road, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 0LA, UK, £14.95

Despite the recent flood of Galapagos books, this latest one covers a somewhat different field from the rest and so meets a somewhat different need. It is neither a slim pocket guide such as M.P. Harris's *Field Guide to the Birds of the Galapagos*, nor yet an authoritative compilation of scientific information written by experts on their specialist subjects, such as *Galapagos* in the Pergamon Press's *Key Environment* series. Mr Jackson's guide book falls somewhere between the two, and very properly draws freely on these and other sources. It is a substantial soft-backed volume dealing with the historical background, the environmental setting, conservation problems and information for visitors, as well as eight substantial chapters on the various divisions of wildlife (plants, reptiles, seabirds etc.). There is

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also a 15-page bibliography to help those who wish to give further study to particular aspects, and a useful checklist of plants and animals.

The author's history is a little less accurate than his natural history, but this is not a matter of great moment: scientists often fail to check historical information with the care they would consider obligatory in their own disciplines. Mr Jackson is a sound biologist and knows the islands intimately, having taken part in the Cambridge University Darwin Centenary Galapagos Expedition as well as serving there for years as a naturalist guide. He writes simple, straightforward English with a minimum of scientific jargon, even in his chapter on 'Colonisation, Evolution and Ecology'. When he is driven to use technical expressions, he explains them.

Altogether, this is a useful addition to Galapagos literature. How I wish there had been a comparable book when I first visited the Galapagos a generation ago.

G.T. Corley Smith

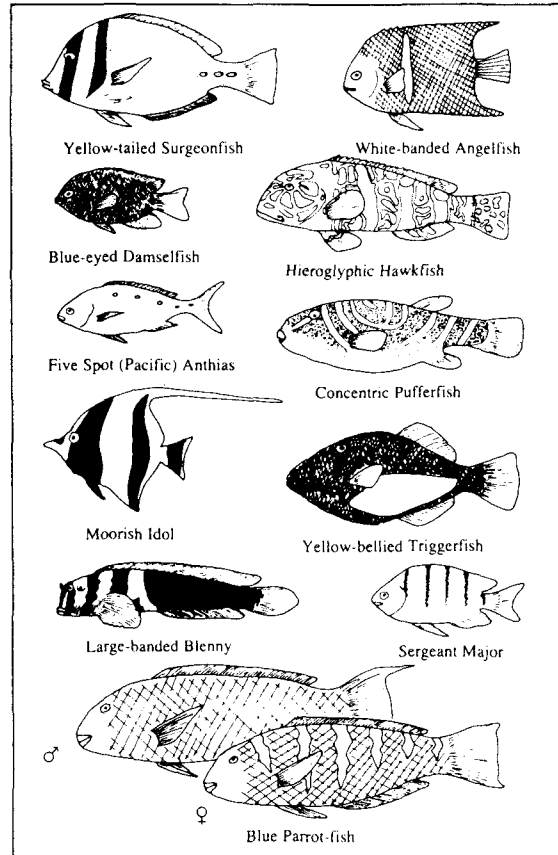
## A Directory of Crocodilian Farming Operations

R.A. Luxmore, J.G. Barzdo, S.R. Broad and D.A. Jones

Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit, IUCN, 1985. £8

When the TRAFFIC Group (ancestor of the World Trade Monitoring Unit) was being run from the FFPS office, one of the first projects developed was a survey of wildlife farms. Nearly 10 years later success has been achieved and a comprehensive survey carried out. This publication is part of the results. It is difficult to eulogize the style, but I can say that it is a basic research tool for anyone interested in crocs or captive breeding. A goldmine of facts and figures, it lists every known farm, country by country. Crocodile farming is a growth industry, but its effects on wild crocs are mixed. Ranching, which uses wild animals, may be a better option, since it involves habitat conservation. However, the main threat is summarized in the last line of the introduction. 'The high levels of illegal trade in crocodilian products suggest that the current degree of control is far from adequate in many parts of the world.'

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Some Galapagos fish (based on drawings by Sir Peter Scott). From *Galapagos: A Natural History Guide*, published by University of Calgary Press. The book contains over 100 black-and-white photos and illustrations, and a 16-page full-colour insert.

## The Blue Holes of the Bahamas

Robert Palmer

Jonathan Cape, 1985, HB £10.95

Blue Holes are the entrances to some of the world's most spectacular underwater caves. The first exploration of the Bahamian Blue Holes was as recent as the 1960s, and since then those on Andros have been surveyed in some detail by Rob Palmer's team. His book, written as a tale of adventure and exploration, provides an exciting account of their discoveries, culminating in a 1984 expedition, which was the subject of a BBC documentary. Apart from a giant moray eel encountered rather uncomfortably by the author in a narrow passage, most Blue Hole wildlife cannot be described as spectacular, but it is treasure to the biologist. An entire new order of

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