

Wild Heritage of South Africa, by **Douglas Hey**. O.U.P., R.7.05: U.K. 84s.

This is yet another cogent plea for effective wildlife conservation before it is too late, and it would have been preferable to focus attention on this by starting, not ending, with the chapter on "The Conservation of Wild Life," followed by the graphic exposition on "Man and Wild Life."

"Formerly man was controlled largely by his environment and the forces of nature, today he is beginning to control his environment," says the author. How right he is. The senseless dissipation of a priceless asset is man's handiwork, and indeed it is a sad commentary that now conservation of wild animals is advocated primarily for tourism *i.e.* pecuniary profit, and for their utility, instead of for themselves.

Profusely illustrated, with many drawings of outstanding merit, it is a pity that the high standard of some has not been maintained throughout, really shocking is that of the puff adder on p. 121. These illustrations depict a range of wild life, including flora, from micro-organisms to elephants and whales, but nowhere is there an indication of relative size. This detracts seriously from their value.

Nevertheless, this is a comprehensive and richly informative tome. The talented Director of Nature Conservation in the Province of the Cape of Good Hope, who is dedicated to his vocation, has gone to infinite pains to provide a wealth of knowledge which is almost bewildering in its scope. One hopes it will achieve the wide distribution it deserves.

C. R. S. PITMAN

A Continent in Danger, by **Vincent Serventy**. Deutsch, 45s.
The Great Extermination, edited by **A. J. Marshall**. Heinemann, 42s.

Captain Cook, exploring the coast of Australia only 197 years ago, found species of a primitive fauna, a beautiful and interesting flora, indigenous tribes living in the stone age, and a countryside magnificent and varied. Australia has been separated from the Asian land mass for so long that much of the fauna and flora have retained their original primitive characteristics, unique on earth today. Vincent Serventy's enthralling interesting and beautifully presented book, with spectacular illustrations in both colour and black and white, presents with great sensitivity an intimate picture of the mammals, birds, and reptiles of the continent and of the environment in which they live. Both he and Professor Marshall with his co-authors describe the devastating effect of the impact of Western civilisation on this unique fauna and flora.

Professor Marshall does not pull his punches in apportioning blame for the present deplorable state of affairs. The first settlers had to clear the land for agriculture; to them the forest was not a friend but an enemy, and they were very wasteful in their methods. Fire was the normal method of clearing the thick undergrowth; animals which ate the grass or which they believed preyed on their flocks and herds, had to be destroyed. Finally, to remind them of home, they introduced exotic birds, mammals and plants—a menace to the indigenous flora and fauna. Today the destruction of the habitat by fire, axe and saw and machines, and the introduction of exotics, together with shooting, trapping and poisoning continues and threatens the survival of many species. How difficult it is to eradicate habits and methods passed on from father to son! Leonard