

ever since he started moving in. It would appear that this is the first such detailed survey to be published, at any rate in popular form.

The author is concerned with the whole of the vertebrate fauna, though he inevitably finds most of his material among the birds and mammals, for these are the groups which have always attracted most attention and, therefore, legislation; he deals with this in an appendix, listing chronologically all measures affecting North American wild life between 1616 and 1922, the first of them being issued by the Government of Bermuda to protect the cahow and the green turtle. Other appendices list all rare, threatened and extinct vertebrates and provide a very adequate bibliography. There are some photographs, but many more charming drawings by Bob Hines which make the book not only very readable but also attractive.

It is commended by a number of internationally known naturalists, including Roger Tory Peterson who suggests that the education of anyone at all interested in wild life would not be complete without it. It is certainly a book which should be handed to all politicians inclined to regard wild life conservation as either unimportant or the concern only of sportsmen. I would like to see a copy presented to all senior politicians in the African colonies recently made self-governing or about to become so. It contains many warnings, but it also shows what can be and has been done when the danger is realized.

G. C.

**THE GHOST OF NORTH AMERICA.** The Story of the Eastern Panther. By BRUCE S. WRIGHT. Vantage Press. New York, Washington, Hollywood, 1959. \$8.50.

More than 200 years ago when the first settlers arrived on the west slopes of the eastern mountains of North America, they found the panther—also known as cougar, puma or mountain lion—present everywhere. These immigrants, in order to get rid of the resident Indians, who would have to move or starve, wantonly destroyed the abundant game, thereby depriving the panther of its main food supply. The killing off of the game brought this predator into conflict with the colonists whose domestic stock was then its best food source. As a result, relentless war was declared on the panther, and during the 110 years' period 1800–1910 it was gradually exterminated—or so it was believed—throughout its range. Thanks to fifteen years' research by Bruce S. Wright, the Director of the North-Eastern Wild Life Station (of the Wild

Life Management Institution of Washington, D.C.) at Fredericton, New Brunswick, it is now known that the eastern panther still survives and is widely but sparingly distributed in parts of its former range—from Florida to Nova Scotia. Not only has it survived, but though a slow breeder—it breeds only every second or third year, with an average litter of two cubs—it is increasing. Moreover, it is believed to have safely passed the low point in numbers from which there can be no recovery. This therefore is an encouraging story which will have special appeal to all who have at heart the interests of the wild creatures. The author has provided a careful analysis of a sample of the many sight and other records, besides describing the creature, its attributes, behaviour and mode of life. That this surely is a case for special protection is indisputable.

C. R. S. P.

TALKING BIRDS. By MAXWELL KNIGHT. G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., London, 1960. 10s. 6d.

An ability to imitate the human voice and other sounds is a curious attribute of certain birds. Two species able to utter the sounds most accurately (the grey parrot of Africa and the hill mynah of parts of South-Eastern Asia) are not known to practice vocal mimicry in the wild state except, presumably, to learn the natural calls from their parents or others of their own kind. The mocking birds, lyre bird, our native starling and others do, in nature, imitate a variety of other sounds, but there is no evidence that such a gift bestows any advantage on the performer and, as the author suggests, it may be that the bird derives a certain pleasure from the practice. The parrot, for example, will often utter its repertoire when it is alone.

Whatever the explanation of this phenomenon, the talking bird is popular and this book will give the pet owner a wealth of excellent advice ranging from the selection and purchase of the bird, whether parrot, macaw, cockatoo, budgerigar, mynah or crow, to its requirements in captivity—living accommodation, diet, taming and training and other important items of management that ensure its welfare.

J. J. Y.

A SEAL FLIES BY. By R. H. PEARSON. Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959. 16s.

This is a highly diverting account of the hand-rearing of two female common or sand-seals (*Phoca vitulina*) taken from the