

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

Book reviews

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