

unfolded before him, and show his unusual ability to disentangle salient facts as he saw them and reassemble them so that he could give considered opinions and advice to those who sought them – little of which, sadly, was ever acted upon.

There is no doubt that Fraser Darling was one of the most important ecologists of the twentieth century. The editor writes: 'Fraser Darling was the pioneer of the ethos of conservation, uniting Nature and human nature in a single harmony. He had an *écologique* sense of right and wrong in the use of the countryside and an unremitting sense of outrage at man's maltreatment of Nature. his pre-occupation was with the Dignity of Life, the absolute beauty and perfectness of Nature'.

The editor, who was a colleague of Sir Frank's and knew him well, gives an all too brief but nevertheless interesting account of his life, which adds colour to an already fascinating series of journals.

David Lovatt Smith

They Dined on Eland: The Story of the Acclimatisation Societies by Christopher Lever (Quiller Press, London, 1992, ISBN 1 870948 59 9, 224 pp., HB £18.50)

Acclimatization is such a mouthful that author and publisher have adopted what appears at first sight to be a somewhat misleading title. They did, of course, dine on eland, but this was not the main objective of the acclimatizers, only their colourful beginning. But in the end was there ever much more to their activities? It does not help that acclimatization has had so many meanings, and needs to be distinguished from domesti-

cation, naturalization and adaptation to feral living. The author's definition, with which I agree, is 'grown or become habituated to a new climate', whether or not the animal or plant in question has become naturalized, i.e. has become an independent population in the wild, unaided by man.

Acclimatization was a typical activity of our vigorous and experimental Victorian ancestors. The only atypical thing about it was that it began in France, when Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (not to be confused with his father Etienne G. St-H.) founded the *Société Zoologique d'Acclimatation* in 1854. Not to be outdone, the British, led by the celebrated naturalist Frank Buckland (who could afford to be eccentric because his father was an Anglican dean), launched the Acclimatisation Society 6 years later. Its foundation pre-echoed that of the FFPS's forbear, the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire formed 33 years later. We read that 'a number of gentlemen interested in the Acclimatisation of Foreign Animals and Birds in the United Kingdom have determined to form themselves into a Society'. The gentlemen included three marquesses, two earls and two viscounts. They ate the eland at 'the now celebrated Eland dinner, when for the first time the freshly killed haunch of an African beast was placed on the table of the Aldersgate Tavern'. (*Guinness Book of Records*, are you listening?). Elands were then already flourishing in at least four noblemen's parks.

We must be grateful to Christopher Lever, our leading student of introduced animals, for bringing before us, with his usual meticulous care, the most detailed account ever of the

Acclimatisation Society, which lasted for 7 years, and spawned offspring in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and even Hawaii. What did the Society achieve? Precious little, it seems, for it was criticized for not having made one single useful addition to our fauna, and this is why it faded out so soon. Dining on eland proved to be an insufficient basis for a society. Luckily the SPWFE proved more effective and, as FFPS, is still going strong.

Richard Fitter
FFPS Vice-President

MAMMALS

Mammals of the Indomalayan Region: A Systematic Review by G. B. Corbet and J. E. Hill (Oxford University Press, Oxford, and Natural History Museum, London, 1992, ISBN 019 854693 9, 488 pp. HB £60.00)

As defined in this work, the Indomalayan Region extends from Pakistan in the west to the Philippines and Moluccas in the east, and north to central China and the Ryukyu Islands. This is the first attempt to review the mammal fauna of the whole region and includes 1041 species. It will be an invaluable reference work, providing a major advance in the understanding of the mammal fauna of a very rich region and its relationships to surrounding regions, and a foundation for the preparation of more country-oriented accounts and guides. Such guides have appeared for little of the region in the last 20 years and it has remained an area rather poorly served for compilation of faunal lists and identification aids.

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