

### ARCTIC WILDLIFE

**THE ARCTIC AND ITS WILDLIFE.** Sage, B. 1986. Beckenham, Croom Helm. 187p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-8160-1083-8.

This is an excellent general account of the environment and biota of the Arctic. In one volume it bridges the gap between highly technical and popular accounts of these aspects of the region. The principal emphasis is on the terrestrial environment and inhabitants, birds, marine mammals, and trophic chains; fish and marine biology generally are also discussed. The physical environment is considered with special reference to its effects on the biota and their adaptations to meet its rigours. The author and contributors have used a wide range of sources covering the whole of the Arctic although, owing to availability of information and access, the American Arctic, Greenland, and Svalbard are treated in greater detail than the Asian Arctic.

The first chapter 'Defining the Arctic' analyses the limits of the region and, for the purposes of the book, establishes these as the 10°C maximum isotherm; thus the region covered is that close to the Arctic Ocean and extending south to the Aleutian archipelago. For biological studies this is the most appropriate separator. The information is very well presented and includes results from the latest research with a well selected range of colour plates and good diagrams to supplement the text. Maps are well and frequently used to show particular aspects, but the treatment of place-names is rather variable with apparently random use of anglicisation of some and original forms of others. In contrast the treatment of Linnean and vulgar names of animals and plants is systematic. Although anthropological and historical material is not covered in much detail, the effects of modern human activities are considered with their complex interactions and probable future consequences. These include conservation of biological and other resources, adverse effects of pollution (notably of contamination by pesticides), mineral exploitation, other industrial development, and increasing human activities such as recreation and tourism (especially in the American Arctic). A very comprehensive bibliography is provided which gives an up-to-date summary of the literature concerning the region. (R. K. Headland, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

### EXPEDITION TO BRABANT ISLAND

**ANTARCTIC YEAR: BRABANT ISLAND EXPEDITION.** Furse, C. 1986. London, Croom Helm. 223p, hard cover. ISBN 0-7099-1058-4. £14.95.

A naval engineer by profession and a keen ornithologist by inclination, Cdr Furse is above all a dedicated Antarctic explorer with two previous expeditions to Elephant Island to his credit. On the last occasion he spent three months on the historic island leading a Combined Services team of 16 members, climbing, canoing and making the customary obeisance to science. *Antarctic year* is a monthly journal narrative of his latest venture, this time to Brabant Island in the Palmer Archipelago. The scenario is much as before but now on a more ambitious scale, involving a team of 35 service personnel with logistic support from HMS *Endurance* and encouragement and help from the British Antarctic Survey. For summary of the expedition see his note in this issue of *Polar Record*.

The expedition was divided into three parties, a summer party, a wintering party and a second summer party. The time spent on the island spanned from January 1984 to March 1985. In this way the entire Antarctic winter could be experienced. Like Elephant Island Brabant presents a formidable challenge to the explorer. The first recorded landing there was by Lt Adrian de Gerlache's *Belgica* expedition at Buls Bay in 1898; it is pleasing

and appropriate, therefore, to find the explorer's young grandson, François de Gerlache de Gomery accompanying the main party. Since those heroic days Brabant Island has remained virtually unexplored. Given the necessary guidance there is much that amateurs, as these young men largely were, can usefully do in the scientific line, and there are resuméés at the back of this book of the geological, geomorphological, meteorological and zoological investigations carried out. But adventure was really the name of the game. From the base at Metchnikoff Point parties set out to explore the length and breadth of the island, on skis and manhauling with the logistic support of skidoos. At latitude 64°S the elements tend to be unsympathetic to man, but in the face of rain, snow, fog, blizzards and lurking crevasses the explorers succeeded, by and large, in fulfilling their appointed tasks. The existing map of the island was adjusted; numerous virgin peaks were bagged, including the highest, Mount Parry, and Cdr Furse's 'personal holy grail', the Solvay Mountains, was achieved. All this was accomplished living rough in tents and snowholes. Base huts were eschewed with the single exception of a small cabin made of cardboard. In the concluding phase of the expedition a circumnavigation of the island was carried out in canoes and inflatable boats. The miracle, in all the circumstances, is that there were relatively few accidents; a man bitten by a seal, two broken legs, various tumbles in crevasses, some carbon monoxide poisoning and a duodenal ulcer were the chief medical problems. Fortunately radio links with nearby British Antarctic Survey bases provided a valuable lifeline.

This well-produced quarto volume is a delight to handle and compulsive reading. It is clearly printed, and embellished with magnificent colour plates and legible, helpful maps. Among the appendices are to be found a history of the island, potted biographies of personnel, and evaluative lists of equipment and tables of rations which should be helpful to future expeditions. (H. G. R. King, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER)

### HISTORY OF ARCTIC EXPLORATION

UNVEILING THE ARCTIC. Rey, L. (editor). 1984. Leiden, Brill. 291p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 90 04 07843 6. Guilders 200.

The 28 papers in this volume were presented in 1981 at a conference in Rome, entitled 'The history of the discovery of the Arctic regions as seen through the descriptions of travellers and the work of cartographers from early antiquity to the 18th century'. The conference was the third in a series of meetings organized by the Comité Arctique International, Monaco. The publication is a joint venture of the Comité, the Arctic Institute of North America, and the University of Alaska. It has been published simultaneously as an issue of the journal *Arctic*, 37(4): 321–612, of which the pagination and index references have been retained. In the main the papers presented are concerned with the history of Arctic cartography and the main trends of exploration which led Europeans gradually to modify their theoretical imagery of the North. They range from early perceptions of northern regions in late antiquity, through the quaint conceits of the later middle ages to the increasingly sophisticated delineations of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. A few presentations focus on more specific topics such as the development and achievements of Dutch and Scandinavian cartography, concepts of pre-discovery Alaska in the work of European cartographers, and the early cartography of the Bering Strait region. Cartography and exploration are complementary and there are a number of papers devoted to the main exploratory thrusts which led to the opening up of the Arctic, especially the search for a sea route to Siberia and the Orient via a Northeast Passage,