

Book reviews

rather stilted, limited and disjointed, but it is followed by a further surprise in the form of a chapter on the social and cultural setting for conservation in Arabia. It is crucial to comprehend the Islamic perspective, for 'the role of the foreign conservationist in Arabia is essentially that of a short-term guest, contributing experience from elsewhere towards a uniquely Arabian and Muslim enterprise.' Maybe more Western conservationists should attempt to understand fully the local cultural norms before implanting their ideas elsewhere in the world.

This book is attractively produced and thoroughly readable. The colour photographs are an additional bonus, but surely someone must have good shots in the wild of the three species whose photographs were taken in captivity?

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The Birds of Africa. Volume III

C. Hilary Fry, Stuart Keith and Emil K. Urban

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Ltd. 1988, 611 pp., £71.50.

This is the third of seven volumes of this monumental work on African birds, the first volume of which was reviewed in the July 1983 issue of *Oryx*. Meanwhile one of the primary protagonists, Leslie Brown, died before Volume II was completed and it is sad that this remarkable ornithologist did not live to see the completion of what he regarded as the culmination of his life's work in Africa. The new editors have done a fine job in maintaining the high level of production that Leslie sought and the present volume, which covers the families from parrots to woodpeckers, is authoritative. The illustrations by Martin Woodcock and Ian Willis are excellent, though some of the plates appear cramped.

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This is hardly a field guide and the extension of the series from four to seven volumes will push the price and weight beyond the pockets and carrying capacity of most ornithologists. Nevertheless, anyone with an interest in African birds should seek a mortgage and a forklift truck instantly.

An Introduction to Animal Law Margaret E. Cooper

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Ltd, London, 1988, 213 pp., HB £17.50.

Animal law is a much broader topic than might at first be apparent, and one of the difficulties facing an author on the subject is either to be comprehensive and write an amazingly long book or be selective and risk being criticized for omitting important chunks of the law. Margaret Cooper acknowledges this dilemma in the introduction to her book and has, understandably, chosen the route of being selective and relatively brief.

The result is a book that will be useful to vets who need to know the procedures, for example, required by the law regarding scientific experiments on live animals and to lawyers who are asked to advise on liability when their client's dog bites the next door neighbour's child. However, the book's coverage of conservation law is very sparse, and to a biased conservationist like myself this is disappointing.

The book is primarily concerned with UK law, although there is a short section containing a few introductory sentences to animal law in some other countries. It covers questions of rights and responsibilities over animals—e.g. who owns an animal and who is responsible when it trespasses on to someone else's land. It also covers the law relating to the welfare of both wild and domestic animals, the use of animals for scientific purposes, the control of animal diseases and the treatment of animals

by vets. There is a rather curious chapter on health and safety law which has rather more to do with people than animals.

The chapter on conservation is good in parts – it provides a useful analysis of the sections of the Wildlife and Countryside Act dealing with 'protected birds' and other protected animals – but it is also frustrating because it does not even mention the Act's provisions relating to habitat conservation, although the latter is far more relevant to the plight of many of Britain's animals than the laws prohibiting their killing or capture.

Nevertheless, the book is a valuable introduction to a subject on which far too little has been written, and each chapter is followed by comprehensive references and excellent suggestions for further reading, which are always useful.

Simon Lyster, Senior Conservation Officer (International), World Wide Fund for Nature, UK

Natural History of Vampire Bats

Edited by A.M. Greenhall and U. Schmidt

CRC Press, Florida, 1988, 246 pp., HB £109.00

At the publication price, I am not sure who this book is intended for—it certainly will be out of the reach of many of the Latin American departments and offices that would find it useful. Notwithstanding, Greenhall and Schmidt have edited a first class work dealing with the three blood-feeding bats of Central and South America.

While there have been periods of intense study of vampire bats, due to their association with the spread of rabies in cattle, it would appear that this is no longer regarded as a major problem, indeed figures given in a chapter on economic losses due to the common vampire suggest that overall losses of about