

Antarctica – The Last Frontier

Richard Laws
 Anglia Television
 Limited/Boxtree, 1989, HB
 £14.95

The screening of a major television series on the Antarctic by Anglia's 'Survival' team is certain to attract much interest and this alone will ensure a wide sale for this book, which is described by Aubry Buxton as the 'mirror and counterpart of the series'. Perhaps the book would never have appeared without the TV series, for Dick Laws has had many other weighty matters on his hands, but fortunately for the public he allowed himself to be persuaded to write this book to complement the series.

But the book can stand alone, complete in itself. Dick Laws is the foremost expert on the Antarctic, with a specialist's knowledge of its biology and the wide-ranging understanding of all its other topics that comes from more than 40 years experience. No one could be better qualified for this task. Furthermore, the book is profusely and beautifully illustrated. The author will not want it to be treated as a coffee-table book, but it is hard to resist the temptation to turn the pages from one fascinating picture to the next. Many of the photographs are by Dick Laws (what a pity there are none of his paintings!), but he has been able to call on some other highly skilled photographers, of whom Rick Price deserves special mention, particularly for his wonderful underwater shots.

The book starts with an introductory chapter on the origins of Antarctica from the breakup of Gondwana, its present structure and climate, and a review of the general environment.

There follows a series of chapters each dealing with one biological system or group, ranging from the Southern Ocean with its all-pervading influence on the region, through the sparse terrestrial life, to the various groups dependent on the marine system, culminating with an account of the seals and whales of the Antarctic.

The final chapter, on Man and the Antarctic, examines the very recent influence of man on that region. Dick Laws's long association with all the organizations important in Antarctic research and policy has enabled him to take a broad and thoughtful view of the road we are currently taking. Because of the complexity of the balance between issues of sovereignty, peace-keeping and resource utilization it is impossible to come to a simple conclusion, either gloomy or sanguine. Perhaps the best we can conclude is that man has made less of a mess running the Antarctic in the last 30 years than he has of other parts of the world.

I commend this book highly to all who want an authoritative, readable and beautifully illustrated book on the Antarctic.

Nigel Bonner.

Wildlife Production Systems. Economic Utilisation of Wild Ungulates

Edited by Robert J. Hudson, K. R. Drew and L. M. Baskin
 Cambridge University Press,
 Cambridge, 1989, 469 pp., HB
 £55.00

This is the third volume in the Cambridge Studies in Applied Ecology and Resource Management. I must declare an interest as one of the members of the Editorial Board, although I

had nothing to do with the production of this particular book. As its subtitle makes clear, it is limited to a consideration of wild ungulates and to their consumptive utilization. This is not to belittle the economic value of non-consumptive use, such as game viewing in national parks, but the editors rightly consider that the more controversial aspect of wildlife exploitation needs airing and it is clear that to extend the coverage further could have been made only at the expense of depth.

The book grew out of papers read at the Fourth International Theriological Congress held in Edmonton, Canada, in August 1985 with additional chapters added to fill gaps. The chapters are grouped into eight sections, each with a short introduction. The first section is a general introduction, which sets the scene with chapters on the history of wildlife exploitation and a summary of present-day international trade in wildlife products. The next section deals with subsistence hunting and takes examples from Australia, the tropics and boreal regions. Recreational and commercial hunting are considered next, again with wide-ranging examples. Three chapters on reindeer follow under the general heading of 'Herding' and lead logically into a section on game ranching, defined here as extensive containment systems. Examples are given from North America and southern Africa. Intensive containment systems, otherwise known as game farming, form the basis of a further section, most of whose chapters deal with deer, although there is one on bison farming in North America. In view of the apparent interchangeability of the terms game ranching and game farming in so much of the literature, it is to be hoped that