

BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEWS

Zoos & Animal Rights: The Ethics of Keeping Animals

Stephen St C Bostock (1993). Routledge: London. 224pp. Obtainable from the publishers, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE, UK (ISBN 0 415 05057 X hardback, 0 415 05058 8 paperback) Price £35 hardback, £11.99 paperback.

This is a surprising book even when one knows that the author is not only Education Officer at Glasgow Zoo but also has a degree in philosophy. Most commendably it is full of highly interesting and relevant facts which anyone with an interest in zoos will find informative and helpful. It also pursues philosophical examinations which will undoubtedly stimulate new thoughts on old problems. It is sad therefore that only the reader accustomed to the careful perusal of scientific literature will find it readily digestible.

The constant use of detailed references, linked to both a bibliography and a name index, whilst revealing the admirable effort which has gone into the writing, makes for laborious reading and sometimes breaks the flow of discussion. Furthermore the annoying habit of repeatedly indicating more to come later, is reminiscent of the too long sermon and the depressing warning that we are nowhere near the end yet.

In good detective novel style we are kept waiting until the end and page 192 to find out what conclusions the author is going to reach, but it is all but impossible not to cheat by skipping the more tedious arguments and jumping to the last chapter.

It will be an enormous pity if the wealth of factual information and informed thinking in this book fails to reach an audience beyond the trained scientist. In particular one would like to think that the media would take on board both the information and the careful analyses contained thereby avoiding the bias and ignorance which is so often displayed.

Perhaps Dr Bostock can be persuaded to prepare a popular edition?

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The European Rabbit – The History and Biology of a Successful Colonizer

Edited by Harry V Thompson and Carolyn M King (1994). Oxford University Press: Oxford. 245pp. Hardback. Obtainable from the publishers, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK (ISBN 0 19 857611 0) Price £65.

The editors' intention for this book was to bring together the key scientific literature on the biology of the wild rabbit. This was an ambitious aim given the disparate nature and long history of wild rabbit research. That the editors have largely succeeded is a considerable achievement and makes the book essential reading for anyone with more than a passing interest in the species. Such particular interest is a result of the rabbit's long association with ourselves, in its variety of roles such as domestic pet, laboratory animal, game quarry and consumer of crops. Unfortunately the price of the publication may preclude the widespread access that the material deserves, although this perhaps reflects the high quality of the presentation. The style represents a formal scientific and factual presentation, and there are few concessions to popularization.