

divide is unfamiliar, the Japanese work on monkeys is not ordinarily known, Wallace's line is hotly disputed, the turret-rocks of Formosa are baffling, and where can one learn more about the stupendous scenes of the Himalayas? Such a fine book, produced with such experience and craftsmanship, ought to last; it would if it led on.

E. J. H. CORNER

**Where the Sea Breaks its Back** by **Corey Ford**. Gollancz, 30s.

This is two tales in one: the story of Vitus Bering's voyage of discovery from Kamchatka to Alaska in 1741 and nightmare journey back, and of the remarkable wildlife discoveries of that brilliant, bitter, arrogant, tactless, irascible German naturalist and scientist, the ship's mineralogist, Georg Wilhelm Steller, whose name as a result of this voyage is commemorated in four birds, one fish, three geographical features and the giant northern manatee, the now extinct Steller's sea cow. When they did discover Alaska Steller, to his fury and despair, was allowed only ten hours ashore – 'ten years the preparation, ten hours to do the work itself', as he bitterly recorded in his diary – and even that was only achieved after a blistering attack on Bering to his face for which 'any other member of the crew would have been clapped in irons'. The wreck of the ship on Bering Island after a return voyage of storm and disaster along the Aleutian chain – 45 of the crew of 77 died, including the captain, mostly of scurvy, which Steller could have prevented if they had heeded him – at least gave Steller eight months in which to study the flora and fauna. Sea otters, blue foxes – which sniffed at the dying, ate the dead and dug up the buried corpses – fur seals, sea lions, all were studied and meticulously described, and above all the huge sea cows, never seen before or since by any scientist.

A new boat, built out of the wreck on Bering Island, brought the survivors back to Kamchatka, and with them the news of the fur seals and sea otters. Next spring the massacre began.

This well told, dramatic and tragic story is based on Steller's own journal. In a final chapter the author tells briefly what has happened to the sea otters of Alaska since Steller's day – a story of slaughter and cruelty, but with a happier outcome today than could have seemed possible fifty years ago.

M. S. FITTER

**Conservation and Caribbean Regional Progress** by **Carl A. Carlozzi** and **Alice A. Carlozzi**. Antioch Press, Yellow Springs, Ohio, \$4.00.

This little 160-page book deals with the Lesser Antilles, 22 intriguing islands aggregating less than 5000 square miles. Without pretension as to scientific thoroughness, it discusses, among other natural and historic features, the vertebrate fauna and its current plight.

Because of the geological youth of the islands, vertebrates were never abundant. Birds and reptiles predominate. Mammals are rare. Except on Trinidad the birds are mostly inconspicuous. Parrots are found on Dominica, St Lucia, St Vincent, and Bonaire. Introduced birds of paradise persist on Little Tobago. The scarlet ibis and oil birds of Trinidad are mentioned, as are the flamingos of Bonaire. Howler monkeys are found on Trinidad, and smaller species are feral on St Kitts, Nevis, and Grenada. Green turtles are listed for Barbuda and Bonaire.

The fauna of these islands is disappearing. As a result of destruction of most of the original plant communities for agriculture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, introduced predators such as the mongoose and the monkeys, and excessive hunting, some 21 vertebrate species or subspecies endemic to these islands have already disappeared. Included are ten birds. Thirty-six more vertebrates, including 16 birds (all the parrots) are threatened.