

Book reviews

Advances in Animal Conservation

Edited by J. P. Hearn and J. R. Hodges

Oxford University Press for the Symposia of the Zoological Society Series, 1985, 282 pp, HB £35

This volume comprises the proceedings of a symposium marking the 80th birthday of Lord Zuckerman in 1984. The papers are reviews arranged in four groups—Conservation in the wild (including reintroductions and conservation by utilization), Conservation in captivity (zoos, disease problems and a helpful review of the genetic management of captive species), Conservation and government (exploring the costs of conservation and also the income generated by wildlife). These authoritative reviews cover familiar ground, but usefully bring together a wealth of relevant detail. The fourth and perhaps most important section is Conservation and comparative medicine. This deals with the storage and manipulation of sperm, eggs and embryos as well as the control of breeding and the problems of neonatal life in mammals. All too often these rather technical aspects of animal biology are forgotten in the context of conservation, yet they are the key to survival.

It is easy to forget the thousands of increasingly threatened species that may well become extinct before we have time to help them. Some may only be saved by creating population reservoirs in captivity (or in the deep-freeze!) while we wait for the money and opportunity to re-establish secure groups in the wild. Captive breeding and the management of gametes and embryos need detailed research, and their importance must be recognized alongside more glamorous and eye-catching projects. The future conservation of many species (especially the larger ones) may well entail a small 'wild' population, supported by periodic infusions of fresh genes from a captive or refrigerated store. There simply won't be room for large, self-sustaining and genetically independent wild populations any more.

Bringing together these different aspects, this book is a timely reminder that conservation has many facets, which need to be integrated and not treated in isolation. However, the book is almost entirely about mammals. Perhaps this should also remind us that there are other animals too. Many face similar problems and need recognition of the

Book reviews

urgent need for similarly detailed investigation as the basis for their conservation.

Pat Morris, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, and Council Member of the FFPS

Wildlife, Wild Death: Land Use and Survival in Eastern Africa

Rodger Yeager and Norman N. Miller

State University of New York Press, 1986, 173 pp, SB \$10.25, HB \$34.50

This is a depressing book, not so much for its pessimism over the consequences to wildlife of the increasing human demand for land, as for its distorted view of 'conservationists'. The authors have created a straw man of their conservationist and, not surprisingly, have been able to floor him time and again. It is simply not true that those interested in the conservation of wildlife have no concern for people and lack sympathy for African sentiments. Nor is it fair to castigate wildlife biologists for studying animals rather than social problems caused by wildlife, for they are not sociologists and go to East Africa because their study material is there. One might as well condemn Egyptologists for studying pyramids rather than social problems in the slums of Cairo.

The history of conservation given here is a travesty. National parks were not created by the forcible eviction of people from their land by a despotic colonial power. Colonial governments were, at least in East Africa, implacable opponents of national parks, and to claim otherwise is to besmurch the reputations of those dedicated individuals who fought long and doggedly to wring concessions from the authorities. The parks may seem 'vast' but they represent only a small proportion of the total land area available and it would make very little difference to human survival if they were opened up for development. In any case, most are climatically unsuitable for agriculture and the tsetse fly often keeps out the pastoralist.

I found the socio-political account interesting and informative, but the biological aspects are riddled with errors and misconceptions, for example that Europeans have 'conservation predilections' that Africans lack, that 'compressed populations of game animals wreak havoc' on protected areas, that little wildlife research has been carried out in

59

Book reviews

East Africa, that elephants are still dying from overcrowding in Tsavo, and that licensed sport hunting controlled game populations in Kenya. The authors' attitude to tourism is ambivalent. They approve of its foreign exchange earnings but are gratuitously disparaging of tourists, for example why is the group pictured in Fig. 3.4 on rather ordinary-looking chairs said to be 'viewing wildlife in middle-class comfort'? Don't the plebs ever sit down, even on holiday?

There is indeed a need for a reconciliation between the conflicting demands of man and wildlife, but it will need a less prejudiced and more thoughtful approach than is found in this book to achieve it.

S. K. Eltringham, Department of Applied Biology, University of Cambridge, UK.

The Grizzly Bear

Thomas McNamee

Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1985, 308 pp, \$14.50

We humans tend to be most intrigued with those of our fellow species on earth that still have the audacity to kill and perhaps eat some of us occasionally. Our fascination is out of all proportion to the number of occasions upon which this actually occurs these days, and to the biological importance of the predation (except perhaps to those eaten) since there are so many of us and so few left of them. Here in North America, if we resist the temptation to troll our bodies for great whites off our coasts, we really serve as prey for only one beast with any degree of regularity—the grizzly bear, the hero–villain of this book.

Life with *Ursus arctos* has always been difficult, and humans and bears have been coexisting uneasily, first in Eurasia, then in North America via the Bering land bridge, from the Pleistocene ice ages up until 1985. This most recent of several books written about grizzlies, and the first book by Yale graduate Thomas McNamee, is as much about this mingled love–hate–fear relationship as about the grizzly itself. It is a fascinating story of grizzly bear biology, but it is also a sociological study of the people who, in a variety of ways, voluntarily or unavoidably, are linked with the grizzly bear. It is this comprehensive view, and McNamee's skilful presentation of the issues, that

make this book the best single, non-technical treatment of this complex, idiosyncratic, and powerful animal to date.

The many facets of grizzly ecology and the problems a bear faces are elucidated through the technique of following a fictional, but typical (if there is such a thing) family of grizzlies in the Yellowstone Park area of Wyoming from their emergence from hibernation in the spring to the survivor's return the following autumn. Interwoven into the tale are digressions into the distribution, physiology, evolution, taxonomy (i.e. scientific classification of the various forms of the grizzly–brown bear lineage), and many other scientific issues concerning the bear. The overall result is that you learn an awful lot about grizzlies in a palatable and easily absorbed manner. One thing that emerges is that the grizzly is a difficult creature to manage effectively, and there are a multitude of reasons for this, mainly based on the complexity of its ecological requirements, its low reproductive rate, its need for large amounts of virgin wilderness habitat, and its capacity for generating hatred and fear in many humans inhabiting grizzly country.

The book is excellent in its use of the grizzly to illustrate some of the major problems and controversies confronting those people and organizations in charge of maintaining our wildlife and its habitat such as the National Park Service, the US Forest Service, and the various state game agencies that govern grizzly populations. Plagued by classic confrontations between researchers and managers (exemplified by the well-publicized disagreement over grizzly use of dumps in national parks between the Craighead brothers and Yellowstone Park officials), by personal animosities, by conflicting interests, even within the same organization, and by the need to make decisions based upon data, which are by their nature almost always inadequate, it is easy to see why theory and practice in grizzly conservation are often decidedly different and always controversial.

Of primary importance in the book is its illustration of the dire straits in which the grizzly finds itself today. The threats are many, ranging from poaching and legal hunting, to habitat destruction from timber-cutting, mining, construction and

Oryx Vol 21 No 1, January 1987