

## Book reviews

mammals. Fully aware of this, Reay Smithers, in his preface, is too modest about his awareness of the book's unbalance, when treating the different species, especially since some of them are hardly known and a few of them are on the verge of extinction. We are grateful that Reay Smithers has painstakingly collected so much.

After some explanatory notes there follows a glossary of terms used. This was obviously intended for a lay readership: terms like lateral, lingual, mandible, and pollex could have been avoided, but it is suspected that a serious scholar like Reay Smithers respected the wish of some editor. For each mammal family is given the colloquial name, taxonomic notes, description, distribution, habitat, habits, food, and reproduction. From the Carnivora onwards a paragraph is also devoted to the skull, which certainly would have been worthwhile too in other, especially the lower, families.

Taxonomically, the book is based on the identification manual edited by Meester and Setzer (1971–1974) with its unavoidable shortcomings, based itself on older sources or partly on museum specimens only.

The maps are of excellent quality, very often extending beyond the frame of the thematically limited range of the Southern African Subregion, but providing all the more information. However, excursions to the mammals of other continents seem to be unnecessary; for example the comparison with Asian elephants.

It would have been useful, perhaps, to have mentioned the local names of the mammals in the different native languages. On the other hand, some detailed and very specialised items seem to be superfluous in this overall survey, for example the percentage of species of birds or reptiles in the stomachs of African wild cat.

I regret that my reverence to Reay Smithers cannot be extended to the artists: the colour plates by Clare Abbott are certainly not the full colour emphasised in the foreword, but restrict themselves to a few colours ranging from yellow to several shades of brown to the artist's pencil stroke. Thus, the colour plates express an artistic, but often unnatural view, not exactly the goal of a book of empirical natural history. I believe that to be able to describe an animal, one has to know

and to love or at least to esteem it. Reay Smithers obviously does, the artist may still have to learn this. Ms Abbott's black-and-white drawings are excellent, however. Many other black-and-white drawings are, unfortunately, by other artists, ranging from interesting sketches to clumsy and often crooked results.

The credit for this book goes to the Mammal Research Institute of Pretoria University by assigning this enormous task to a man like Reay H.N. Smithers. May it raise interest and protection for a wonderful subregion and fauna!

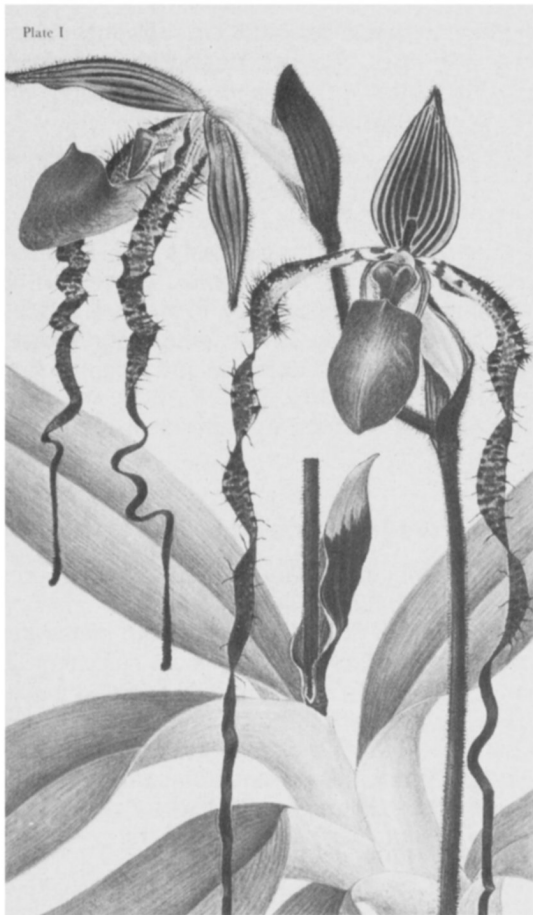
*Dr Walter Poduschka*  
Chairman of IUCN/SSC Insectivore Specialist Group

### The Kew Magazine

*The Kew Magazine*, launched in 1984, replaces *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, and while retaining the tradition of publishing fine colour plates and descriptions of choice plants in cultivation it extends its scope considerably. The new publication aims to reflect the progress in the botany and culture of plants all over the world and contains articles on the conservation and ecology of plants in the wild and in cultivation.

Delving into the first two issues, I found a wealth of interest. A strikingly bizarre orchid *Paphiopedilum sanderianum* is featured; it was first discovered in 1885, but only recently rediscovered in Borneo where its location is kept secret to diminish the chances of commercial collectors finding it. It is now in cultivation at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. Other plants brought into cultivation recently are described and illustrated: *Aechmea abbreviata* (Bromeliaceae), was collected from Ecuador in 1981 in a sterile state and donated to Kew, where it has since flowered; *Dimorphanthera kempteriana* (Ericaceae), a large evergreen liana from New Guinea, which, despite doubts about whether it would be easy to cultivate, has been successfully grown for the last eight years at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh; and *Trimezia sincorana* (Iridaceae), with attractive clear-yellow flowers, from Brazil. This last species grows in acid sandstone country in a climate of extremes and its rhizome is used locally to make a nutritive and slightly purgative meal for children.

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*Paphiopedilum sandermanum*

RODELLA PURVES

There is an article on Conservation of Rare and Endangered Bulbs by Sara Oldfield, another on Rare and Little-Known Crocuses in Cultivation by Brian Mathew and one on the fascinating Underground Orchids of Australia by Mark Clements and Phillip Cribb. Descriptions in Flowers of the Phu Luang Wildlife Sanctuary and the account of Alpine Ecology in the Barun Khola, Nepal made me feel I ought to pack my rucksack immediately. The magazine also includes book reviews, readers' letters, series on Portraits of Botanical Artists and on Plants in Peril, and forthcoming events of interest.

There is much of interest here to the botanist, horticulturist and conservationist, and I wish the new publication success.

Jacqui Morris

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*The Kew Magazine* incorporating Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* is published by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in association with Collinridge. Annual subscription is £30 in the UK, £35 overseas and \$45 in the US. Subscription enquiries to Marston Book Services Ltd, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford, UK.

## Nursery Sources, Native Plants and Wild Flowers

Compiled by New England Wild Flower Society, Inc., Garden in the Woods, Hemenway Road, Framingham, MA 01701, USA  
Price of \$3.50 includes post in the US

Various specialist plant societies have produced Codes of Conduct discouraging the purchase of wild-collected plants from nurseries. The New England Wild Flower Society has gone one step further and produced a useful guide to the US nurseries that sell native plants, indicating the source of the material.

Information is given on 193 nurseries based on a survey of 430 North American native plant nurseries. In each case a rough guide is given to the range of plant material offered together with an indication of the proportion of wild-collected and propagated material. Orchids are treated separately, as the Society points out that 'most wild orchids can be especially difficult to grow if taken out of their natural habitats'. The guide includes seven nurseries offering native orchids, which are all collected from the wild, and recommends that such plants should not be bought.

Sara Oldfield

## Environmental directory

The new revised (6th) edition of the Civic Trust's *Environmental Directory* of national and regional organisations of interest to those concerned with amenity and the environment is now available from the Civic Trust, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW17 5AW at £3.00 including postage.

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