

The style of Chancellor's book is compact. It would seem that no discovered fact has been omitted. For example: 'After landing in New York, Audubon did not make straight for Mill Grove. Instead, he walked thirty miles to Greenwich, Connecticut, to cash a letter of credit. On the way he succumbed to yellow fever . . .' and we learn that two Quaker ladies 'saved his life'. But there is no further or prior mention of these ladies, or of yellow fever, or Greenwich, or why the money was there. But, I suppose, life is like that, and certainly Audubon's was, as he moved from meeting Sir Walter Scott (each lauded the other), antagonising John Keats (of all people, but some of brother George Keats's money had gone down the Audubon drain), being captured by HMS Rattlesnake (not T. H. Huxley's vessel), suffering patrons (the Earl of Kinnoull thought his birds 'alike' and a 'swindle'), and generally promoting his image of a backwoodsman who occasionally hit town.

The appearance of the book is splendid, a sort of poor man's *Birds of America*, with several colour and many black and white illustrations of the famous watercolours. They alone are sufficient for us to agree that 'John James Audubon is the patron saint of birds', and the text is equally adamant that he is patron saint of nothing else.

ANTHONY SMITH

Encounters with Nature, by **Leslie Brown**. Oxford UP, £6.50.

For many years Leslie Brown has been entertaining and instructing us about the wildlife and ecology of Africa and elsewhere and has established a reputation for original observation, lively description and lucid comment. In this new book he looks back on his life as a naturalist and recounts some of his outstanding experiences and adventures. So in one volume we have what might be called 'the quintessence of Leslie Brown' — a welcome summary of several of his earlier books along with other material.

His themes range widely: aardvarks, badgers and honey badgers, beavers, chimpanzees, nightjars, otters, pelicans, tigers and whale sharks. How he sought long and hard for that rare and splendid antelope, the mountain nyala, makes a most engaging narrative that takes us up into the vast, bandit-infested, rainy, cold (yet sometimes scorching) uplands of Ethiopia, which are also the home of Simien foxes, walia ibexes and lammergeiers.

But for most of us Leslie Brown is the eagle man or the flamingo man and for me it is the accounts of these two groups of birds that make the best chapters. The flamingo episodes are especially vivid: we rarely do get to feel how almost unlivable life can be on an equatorial soda lake — the lead-weight heat, the awesome stench, the stultifying glare and then, totally in contrast with these horrors, the unbelievable beauty of a great throng of pink and white flamingos and their brown young ones. Few of us can go and experience truly wilderness Africa, so it is good to be assured that it still survives here and there. And it is well that writers like Leslie Brown can picture it for us so convincingly. To complement the text each of the thirteen chapters is prefaced by very lively, full-page drawings by Doris Tischler; and the colour photograph of flamingos on the dust jacket is altogether beautiful.

WILLIAM CONDRY

The End of the Game, by **Peter H. Beard**. Collins, £10.

That *The End of the Game* has run into a second edition suggests either that the patient is an unconscionable time dying or that the title is prematurely pessimistic. This is a strange book. According to the dust jacket, it retails the decline of Tsavo National Park in Kenya, but, with three of the five chapters concerned with other regions, there is little space left in which to develop the Tsavo theme, particularly as only 70 of the 280 or so pages contain

any printed matter at all. This is, therefore, essentially a picture book with most of the illustrations being old snapshots of people, usually standing rifle in hand over a dead beast, or of decaying large mammals. One 'chapter' consists only of pictures, mostly aerial shots of decomposing elephants which only the cognoscenti will recognize as victims of the 1970/71 drought in Tsavo. Few of the photographs are captioned and some are grossly misleading; e.g. the apparent elephants' graveyard is presumably a bone dump behind a field laboratory. So confused is the book that one assumes it must contain a 'message', but it is difficult to fathom what that message is. At one level, it seems to be no more than a lament for the past, and there is also the implication that the invading white man is to blame for the changes that have taken place. But does the author really think that Africa could have remained forever isolated from the outside world, or does he want African reservations, similar to those for Indians in his native America, where 'the harmonies and balances of the early days' can be maintained? It is only in the Epilogue, written by R. M. Laws, that the real message comes through, viz. that if we want to conserve the game in national parks, it may be necessary to control elephant populations by culling. Failure to manage elephants may lead to habitat deterioration as in Tsavo and to the suffering portrayed in Chapter 6 of this book, but Africa is more than Tsavo, or than Kenya for that matter, and there is still time in which to save her wildlife. The real threat is the burgeoning human population, and unless we can get that under control very soon it will indeed be the end of the game for us all.

S.K. ELTRINGHAM

Lifeboats to Ararat, by Sheldon Campbell. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £6.50.

From personal knowledge of the author, and the foreword by Gerald Durrell, I had hoped that this book would fill the need for a thoughtful, well-documented and well-argued commentary on the present, and likely future, role of zoos in the conservation of species. Sadly, however, either the author himself, or more probably his publishers, have unwittingly reflected one of the greatest problems facing a conscientious modern zoo director, which is the need for popular appeal. Consequently large sections of the book are filled with anecdotes gleaned by the author from various sources, mostly American, and of the type that appeal to the general reader interested in animals.

The stories reflect animal idiosyncrasies, visitor eccentricities, some of the problems caused by well-intended conservation legislation, particularly as applied in the US, and the physical dangers inherent in zoo work, which I have always found to be an unflinching source of interest to lay people. To sell a book to the general public, therefore, it is presumably necessary to give them what they want; this the author has done very well. He has both wit and resourcefulness as when, for instance, in a reference to motherhood being at least partially a learned art amongst the higher mammals, he coins the phrase 'evolution had created a market for Dr Spock'.

Some excellent points are made. He refers to a constant dilemma of zoo decision-makers, the conflict between the public's desire to see young animals being hand-reared in nurseries and thereby being available for use with the media, or reared by their mothers. I know from personal experience that publicity for a zoo is most easily achieved by having tame animals available to take into a television studio or be posed with a celebrity. I also know that this is seldom in the interest of the animal concerned and never in the interest of the species. I would be surprised if today any reputable zoo in fact chose to have hand-reared animals in its collection.

I cannot be happy either with the emphasis on market value of animals, as hopefully fewer and fewer zoos are now concerned with this. High money values will inevitably in most cases be counter-productive as far as species survival is concerned. The 'open market' is something which should no longer exist in the context of, for instance, gorillas, where this phrase occurs.

JOHN KNOWLES