

The different aspects of conservation are approached light-heartedly, but the discussions are serious; the appreciations are sound, and the criticisms of the situations which have arisen are fair. Poaching, because of the seriousness of this cruel and wasteful practice, is very rightly discussed early in the book. The value of public opinion, and of education in this context is emphasized, and this by itself is sufficient justification for the book having been written, and for it being read. Certainly the reader puts it down with a good idea of the contemporary situation, a better knowledge of the present trends in conservation, and, which is perhaps best of all, a not unhelpful outlook for the future.

D. V.-FG.

WHALES. By E. J. SLIJPER. Hutchinson, London. 1962. 63s.

There has long been a need for a comprehensive work on whales, giving an up-to-date account of our knowledge of their biology and setting this against the background of the whaling industry past and present. The distinguished anatomist Professor Slijper has now given us a book which goes a long way towards meeting this need. It opens with an historical introduction outlining the development of knowledge of the cetacea and the history of whaling. This is followed by chapters on various aspects of whale biology including their evolution, anatomy, physiology, behaviour, feeding, distribution and migrations, reproduction. A final chapter on the future of whales and whaling, a classification, and a useful thirty-eight page bibliography complete the book. The translation by A. J. Pomerans, revised from the Dutch edition of 1958, reads very well and the book is attractively produced and lavishly illustrated with photographs and drawings.

In recommending the book it is therefore unfortunate that some reservations have to be made. There are errors of fact and of interpretation throughout. Examples are the use of SOFAR in chapter eight when first listening stations and later SONAR are meant; the misleading picture of our knowledge of humpback migrations presented in figures 181 and 183; the scales of figures 9 and 10 which are obviously different. References are often not to be found in the list for the chapter concerned and the index is not always trustworthy. There are a number of misprints.

And what of the future of whales and whaling? Professor Slijper gives a useful account of the International Whaling Commission and of the problems it faces in trying to balance the individual needs of the eighteen member countries, while at the same time protecting the whales without ruining the whaling industry. He points out that there is little danger of exterminating any species except possibly where a reduced stock of one species can still be hunted while the main catch falls on another. Here the blue whale comes to mind and it is heartening to read that the problem of defining the maximum permissible catch is being expertly investigated. In the last few seasons the whaling fleets of Norway and Britain have declined while those of Japan and the U.S.S.R. have steadily increased. It will be interesting to see whether the results of these latest investigations can convince the Antarctic industry that some reduction of the catch is "absolutely unavoidable".

S. G. B.

ANIMALS OF BRITAIN. Edited by DR. L. HARRISON MATTHEWS. *Sunday Times* Publications. 3s. 6d. each.

It is often said that the British Mammals are a much neglected study, certainly there are few books on many of them. But at last a series of booklets is being published—the first eight already available—by the *Sunday*

*Times* Publications, under the general title of "Animals of Britain", and edited by Dr. L. Harrison Matthews.

The publishers are to be congratulated on this fine series of monographs, each one of which is written by an acknowledged authority on his subject. Beautifully produced, with fine photographs, a pleasing type-face which makes easy reading, and complete with a skeletal drawing inside the back cover, how the cost is kept so low beats this reviewer. They can be recommended not only for all those interested in the British mammals, but to anyone interested in natural history and wild life.

The first eight books in the series include "Badgers" by E. G. Neal, "Grey Seals" by H. R. Hewer, "Horseshoe Bats" by John Hooper, "Water Voles" by S. R. Ryder, "Hedgehogs" by Maxwell Knight, "Otters" by E. G. Neal, and two by Monica Shorten on the Red and Grey Squirrels. Titles promised include Foxes, Rabbits, Deer, and many others.

A highly recommended series of monographs.

A. G. B.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS OF EUROPE. By WALTER HELLMICH. London: Blandford Press. 16s.

The number of naturalists who take continental holidays is annually increasing but there is no work, in English, on the continental reptiles and amphibians that they can take with them. The appearance of such a book should therefore be welcome but before criticizing this work, it is well to consider what could be produced for 16s. and include 138 different species. Surely chapters on the general biology of these animals and on extra-European species should be cut to a minimum or omitted altogether? But nearly a quarter of the book is devoted to the introductory topics. There are already plenty of good books on reptilian and amphibian biology, if the amateur naturalist is interested in such topics as anatomy he would surely be willing to buy one—such matter is out of place here. But into the first forty pages has been crammed a miscellany of unbalanced facts and inaccuracies. Why, for instance, should the skeletons of amphibians be dealt with in detail and those of reptiles be omitted? If the sketch of a frog's hind limb is intended to show the elongation connected with a jumping locomotion this is not stressed in the text. In any case, the elongation of the hind limb is achieved by extension of the tarsal region, not by insertion of a humerus between girdle and femur!

There is also too much repetition; two indices in a small book seem superfluous and, as there are notes on captivity under each species, a chapter on this subject is not necessary. In any case the amount of useful information that can be included in three pages is negligible. Does the author really mean to suggest that an amateur, foolish enough to keep a poisonous snake and to get bitten by it, should "open the wound and cauterise it" himself? Perhaps some of these mistakes may have crept in in the translation, for instance, *Vipera aspis* has become the "Aspic Viper", chamaeleons are found chiefly in Ethiopia and Madagascar and "as a general rule the male is sexually distinct from the female". The first statement is amusing, the second misleading, and the third meaningless. The reviewer would like to know who are these Lilliputian "experts" who consider the Uropeltidae, Xenopeltidae, and Anilidae as "Giant Snakes" and, although it is a long time since he last rode a horse, he cannot remember ever being told to grasp it with his arms, so the comparison with mating frogs is misleading.