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should conserve species. It is less sure on 'how'. In his 'Coda' (Chapter 12) the author admits that we do not yet know how to achieve the two very simple aims of maintaining the habitat of animals and plants, and of not over-exploiting them. In fact, we do have the technical knowledge but lack the political power or will to take effective conservation action. It is to be hoped that this excellent book will come to the attention of those politicians who can do something about it.

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

The State of the Ark

Lee Durrell

Bodley Head, London, 1986, 224 pp, HB £12.95

In *The State of the Ark* Lee Durrell has attempted the near impossible—an up-to-the-minute balance sheet of the current standing and the future prospects of our plant and animal fellow travellers on the earth, our latter-day ark. In this formidable task she was aided by a team of researchers working in collaboration with the IUCN. Together they have covered an amazing amount of ground: the first chapter considers the basic life-support systems of climate, water, carbon and nitrogen cycles and the web of living things that have evolved on our planet. The diversity of ecosystems and plant and animal species follow and their well-being (or otherwise) is dealt with on a mainly biogeographic basis. The final chapter is concerned with the development of conservation ideas and bodies.

Throughout, the relationships of animals with all aspects of their environment are stressed, and man is generally seen as the destroyer. No punches are pulled over the problems of soaring human populations or the belief, too often held by governments and big business, that the future is well mortgaged for today's quick buck. Yet not all is gloom, and the good sense and good will towards the environment shown by some people shine through many of the 'case studies' that give supporting details to the main themes of the book. These case studies include such diverse topics as soil loss through agricultural malpractice, the effect of dune buggies in the California Desert, caribou and the Alaska oil pipeline, crocodile farms in Papua New Guinea, survival of the

cahow, and the Chipko movement, which protects trees in India.

So wide-ranging a book must to some extent be superficial and some mistakes are inevitable, although these are mostly minor misidentifications and misspellings. More aggravating to me is the basic layout, with the main text often interrupted by two or more pages of case studies, photographs or maps, which break the thread of the argument. The photographs are, on the whole, stunning, but the artwork does not match their standard, and the maps, for which the book is subtitled 'An atlas of conservation in action', are too frequently overcrowded with detail and are not easy to read.

But these are minor quibbles, for this will be a valuable book for students at all but the most elementary levels. Specially useful are the references to sources of information, which are given in far more detail than is usual in a popular work. They will allow readers to follow up any subject that has aroused their interest, and surely, with so much to choose from on so vital a topic, nobody reading this book can remain totally indifferent.

Joyce Pope, Department of Zoology, British Museum (Natural History).

Iceland: Nature's Meeting Place

Mark Carwardine

Iceland Review, 1986, £9.50

Iceland is much more than a convenient location for Reagan–Gorbachev summit meetings. Nothing like as bleak and inhospitable as its name implies, Iceland has warmer weather than might be expected, the scenery is magnificent, and there is an abundance of wildlife. Twenty million breeding puffins, 200 pairs of the majestic gyrfalcon, pods of killer whales patrolling the coastal waters and the odd polar bear that has wandered too far south are just some of the highlights.

Surprisingly, relatively little has been written about Iceland's fauna and flora—until this book, that is, which more than makes up for the existing gaps. It provides a comprehensive and very readable account of everything you could want to know about Iceland's birds, mammals, fish, invertebrates and plants—where to find them and how to get there—and has a complete species

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checklist. There is also an interesting chapter on conservation problems and policy. Wouldn't it be nice if the book managed to persuade the Icelandic Government to drop its flagrant abuse of the 'scientific whaling' exemption in the International Whaling Convention under which the Icelandic commercial whaling industry is being kept alive. . . .

Written by Mark Carwardine, a naturalist and consultant to the World Wildlife Fund, the book is beautifully illustrated with 90 colour photographs. It is good value at £9.50 and has the merit of being small enough to fit conveniently into a coat pocket. A must for any naturalist planning to visit 'the Jewel of the North'.

Simon Lyster, International Treaties Officer for the World Wildlife Fund.

The Botany of Mangroves

P.B. Tomlinson

Cambridge University Press, 1986, 413 pp, HB £47.50 (\$69.50)

Mangroves occur throughout many parts of the world and are invariably encountered by most tropical travellers because they occupy the most sheltered parts of shore lines. At one time people did not like to enter them because of their reputation as infested swamps, but to the ecologist, naturalist and conservationist they represent an intriguing interface between the marine and terrestrial communities. Nowadays they are also considered as ideal arenas for water sports, and the ever-increasing marine leisure industry is creating havoc in places like the Everglades. Mangrove ecosystems are extremely rich and varied, containing a wealth of different organisms of considerable importance to complex food chains, but are also a major source of revenue to fishing, forestry and agriculture. A lot is known about them, but because they represent diverse habitats when viewed on a world scale they are rarely considered in one volume. This book aims to plug that gap. It is a concise compendium of taxonomic, geographical, ecological, floristic, architectural, morphological, anatomical and physiological information of mangrove specializations, and for this reason it will be of considerable value to students and professionals alike. I can warmly recommend it.

C.J. Humphries, Botany Department, British Museum (Natural History), London, UK.

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Amboseli: Nothing Short of a Miracle

David Lovatt Smith

East African Publishing House Ltd, PO Box 30571, Nairobi, Kenya, 1986, £8.00, K Shs 98.50, US\$12.00.

Purchasers of this 95-page paperback could be misled by its title because it is neither a guidebook nor a history of Amboseli. The 'miracle' of the title refers to the sudden enormous increase, late in 1957, in the output of the springs that feed the Ngong Narok swamp.

The author, who at the time was Assistant Warden of the then much larger Amboseli National Reserve relates how by the frantic efforts of its skeleton staff the added water was made to flow along an ancient and partly blocked depression, now known as the Simek river, and then, by means of a cutting, through higher ground to the edge of the long-dry Amboseli lake 6 km away, where it created the small Conch lake, and later still the Longolong swamp.

These events, which are largely unknown or forgotten only 30 years after they occurred, resulted in a six-fold increase in available water in the core area of Amboseli and a consequent respite in the then critical competition for watering places between wildlife and the ever-increasing Maasai herds.

The author tells his tale in a straightforward manner and the book is well illustrated, mainly with his own colour and black-and-white photographs depicting the events he describes. One or two of the photographs could have been better reproduced, and something has gone wrong with the colour gradient of the relief map on pages 24 and 25. An oddity of the text is the general, but not invariable, use of capital initial letters in the names of animals and plants; this becomes irritating when the yellow-barked acacia or fever tree is referred to as the 'Yellow Fever tree', seemingly implying some connection with the disease of that name.

The background of some of the pictures shows the tremendous change the vegetation of Amboseli has undergone. This is very clearly seen in a pair of photographs of the same view from Observation Hill taken in 1956 and 1985. The first shows the fever-tree-fringed lower end of the Ngong Narok swamp and looks across the plains

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