

SHORTER NOTICES

STUDY OF TROPICAL VEGETATION. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Kingsway, London. 30s.

One of the most urgent problems facing governments in tropical lands is to bridge the gulf between production and consumption of food. A number of ways of approaching the task are suggested in the report of a symposium on humid tropical research, held in Kandy, Ceylon, in 1956, and now published in a book by Unesco.

The obvious course is to open up new land for cultivation, but almost inevitably it is natural forest that pays the price of such development, and it is now recognized that the tropical evergreen forest—the highest form of vegetational development in the world—is a fast diminishing asset, and only through intensive research can the problem presented by increasing population and diminishing forest be solved. The twenty-six technical papers offered were prepared by specialists from thirteen countries including the United Kingdom, represented by Professor P. W. Edwards, Professor of Botany, University College of North Wales, and the late G. H. S. Woods, the Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Various aspects of the study of tropical vegetation in many different countries are discussed, including aerial photography, mapping, classification, principles of rain-forest sociology and studies of fresh-water swamp forests, together with some special topics concerning temperature, humidity, light, soil and general environmental conditions.

The symposium recorded their alarm at the rapid disappearance of many types of tropical vegetation, and recommended all governments of tropical territories to consider as a matter of urgency the setting up of nature reserves.

U.N.E.S.C.O.

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This number is devoted entirely to nature conservation, with a foreword "Are we Headed for Catastrophe?" by Professor Roger Heim, President of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. It contains also many interesting articles by, for instance, Dr. Maurice Burton and Marguerite Caram with J. J. Petter. Dr. I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt has contributed a fascinating article on his recent expedition to the Galapagos Islands on behalf of I.U.C.N. and Unesco.