

## Book Reviews

**Red Data Book, 1. Mammalia**, compiled by **Noel Simon**. **2. Aves**, compiled by **Jack Vincent**. Survival Service Commission, IUCN, Morges, Vaud, Switzerland, 70s. each.

As far as your reviewer is aware, these books are unique in biological literature, even in their physical form; they are as near to being tools as one could imagine, tools for the library rather than the pocket, for that is the nature of their information on rare and endangered species. They are heavy because of the loose leaf system and its attendant ironmongery, and the paper itself is heavy but, surprisingly, not very tough. The spine of each folder is three inches across. Stiff red index cards project from the text of the Mammalian volume giving easy access to each Order. Pink paper is used only for species gravely endangered, and though they have not been used in any alarmist way, there is a regrettable pink tinge to the edges of the book when closed. Green pages are used for species which are emerging from the danger list but which still need special protection. There is no green tinge to the edge of either book, but happily a few green pages occur in both.

The information given on each species is terse and under standard headings of characteristics, distribution, status, estimated numbers, reasons for decline, measures for conservation, breeding potential in captivity, and so on. The compilation and general treatment could scarcely be bettered. New sheets will be issued as needed and we all hope a greenish tinge will appear on the edge of each volume. It will be less obvious when, as will be inevitable, some pink pages drop out as species become extinct.

These books as tools will be enormously useful, but of their very nature they cannot be enjoyed till green replaces pink. It is interesting to browse at random, nevertheless, and gather some notion from the sheets of what turns a species one way or the other. Sometimes an animal is just plain rare and that's that: flightless rails that are notoriously difficult to find and which may have yielded but a few specimens to scientific museums; one can do little more than accept the fact and try as far as possible to maintain the habitat and prevent introduction of exotics into the islands where such rails are found. All too often rats or mongooses or both appear as reasons for decline. Or take the case of the Seychelles kestrel which has suddenly decreased to great rarity: really, nothing is known of the why and wherefore, and the suggestions of influence of introduced barn owls and small boys with catapults are meaningless. Small lizards are the main food and possibly the history of using organo-chlorine insecticides should be determined. The tendency in the tropics is to slap 'em on.

Shrinking area of habitat is so often the cause of rarity; for example, with cranes, waterfowl and waders, where breeding and feeding grounds have been drained. Where this happens there is the plain, human act of grace needed to establish sanctuary and not to be greedy. But, of course, where has an expanding population of the divine scum made this conscious act, and where will it do so as the situation worsens?

But let us finish on a green card: the square-lipped rhinoceros in Africa has been saved by sound conservation measures in South Africa, measures largely implemented by one of the compilers of these volumes. South Africa has also done well by some of the antelopes; your reviewer re-

members a striking remark made to him ten years ago by a knowledgeable man, not a South African, "Survival of wild life is surer south of the Limpopo than north of the Zambesi." Translocation of the square-lipped rhinoceros to reserves north of the Zambesi, and the scientific development of the techniques of immobilisation (so conspicuously by Harthoorn) are matters of greatest promise for survival of Africa's wild life farther north. The nene goose of Hawaii still carries a white card, but its status is happier than it was in 1948, thanks to rearing in captivity, in which project the Wildfowl Trust took such a pioneer part.

These books are necessarily expensive, but if they are used they will be a good buy, and the price includes the cost of replacement sheets up to December, 1970. If they are used they will be creating up-to-date interest and helping to achieve what we so earnestly desire. These are books which will be constantly new and important.

F. FRASER DARLING

**The Alien Animals: the story of imported wildlife, by George Laycock.** Doubleday, New York, \$4.95.

More and more people are becoming interested in man's own contribution to local faunas in various parts of the world, the innumerable animals he has accidentally or deliberately introduced in various countries outside their natural range. So far there have been a number of books on introduced animals in geographically restricted areas, such as Niethammer's on Europe, Clark's on New Zealand, and my own on the British Isles, but I do not know of any general survey on a world-wide basis in book form other than Charles Elton's, which deals with general principles rather than individual instances. George Laycock's book is therefore most welcome, although its popular and readable approach to the subject still leaves the field open for a definitive survey not only of the major successful introductions throughout the world, but also of the policy implications of all this. For make no mistake, an enormous number of animals are going to be shifted around the world in the next fifty years, and some faunas, especially in North America and the USSR, will be changed beyond recognition.

RICHARD FITTER

**Animal Behaviour, by Niko Tinbergen and the Editors of Life.** Time-Life International, 32s. 6d.

This is the latest volume of the *Life* Nature Library to be published in this country, and those who have seen the others will have some idea of what to expect—splendid pictures, extremely attractive layout, highly instructive, yet generally simple, diagrams in colour; in short, the combination of the techniques of *Life*, the *National Geographic Magazine*, and the *Scientific American*. The result is a book which can be strongly recommended to anyone who wants a quick, easy and authoritative introduction to the study of ethology. It should be particularly valuable for the higher forms of schools and for the very elementary university student, although the expert also will sometimes pick up facts of significance, often put in a new and arresting manner.

It must, however, be realised that the statement on the title page, that the book is by Niko Tinbergen and the Editors of *Life*, is a statement of fact. The primary emphasis of the book is on pictures and diagrams, with