

Book reviews

Advances in Animal Conservation

Edited by J. P. Hearn and J. R. Hodges

Oxford University Press for the Symposia of the Zoological Society Series, 1985, 282 pp, HB £35

This volume comprises the proceedings of a symposium marking the 80th birthday of Lord Zuckerman in 1984. The papers are reviews arranged in four groups—Conservation in the wild (including reintroductions and conservation by utilization), Conservation in captivity (zoos, disease problems and a helpful review of the genetic management of captive species), Conservation and government (exploring the costs of conservation and also the income generated by wildlife). These authoritative reviews cover familiar ground, but usefully bring together a wealth of relevant detail. The fourth and perhaps most important section is Conservation and comparative medicine. This deals with the storage and manipulation of sperm, eggs and embryos as well as the control of breeding and the problems of neonatal life in mammals. All too often these rather technical aspects of animal biology are forgotten in the context of conservation, yet they are the key to survival.

It is easy to forget the thousands of increasingly threatened species that may well become extinct before we have time to help them. Some may only be saved by creating population reservoirs in captivity (or in the deep-freeze!) while we wait for the money and opportunity to re-establish secure groups in the wild. Captive breeding and the management of gametes and embryos need detailed research, and their importance must be recognized alongside more glamorous and eye-catching projects. The future conservation of many species (especially the larger ones) may well entail a small 'wild' population, supported by periodic infusions of fresh genes from a captive or refrigerated store. There simply won't be room for large, self-sustaining and genetically independent wild populations any more.

Bringing together these different aspects, this book is a timely reminder that conservation has many facets, which need to be integrated and not treated in isolation. However, the book is almost entirely about mammals. Perhaps this should also remind us that there are other animals too. Many face similar problems and need recognition of the

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urgent need for similarly detailed investigation as the basis for their conservation.

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Wildlife, Wild Death: Land Use and Survival in Eastern Africa

Rodger Yeager and Norman N. Miller

State University of New York Press, 1986, 173 pp, SB \$10.25, HB \$34.50

This is a depressing book, not so much for its pessimism over the consequences to wildlife of the increasing human demand for land, as for its distorted view of 'conservationists'. The authors have created a straw man of their conservationist and, not surprisingly, have been able to floor him time and again. It is simply not true that those interested in the conservation of wildlife have no concern for people and lack sympathy for African sentiments. Nor is it fair to castigate wildlife biologists for studying animals rather than social problems caused by wildlife, for they are not sociologists and go to East Africa because their study material is there. One might as well condemn Egyptologists for studying pyramids rather than social problems in the slums of Cairo.

The history of conservation given here is a travesty. National parks were not created by the forcible eviction of people from their land by a despotic colonial power. Colonial governments were, at least in East Africa, implacable opponents of national parks, and to claim otherwise is to besmurch the reputations of those dedicated individuals who fought long and doggedly to wring concessions from the authorities. The parks may seem 'vast' but they represent only a small proportion of the total land area available and it would make very little difference to human survival if they were opened up for development. In any case, most are climatically unsuitable for agriculture and the tsetse fly often keeps out the pastoralist.

I found the socio-political account interesting and informative, but the biological aspects are riddled with errors and misconceptions, for example that Europeans have 'conservation predilections' that Africans lack, that 'compressed populations of game animals wreak havoc' on protected areas, that little wildlife research has been carried out in

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