

Book Reviews

The Carnivores of West Africa, by D. R. Rosevear. British Museum (Natural History), £18.50.

This comprehensive study of West African carnivores, the first available for students of the mammal fauna of this vast region, is a worthy successor to the author's earlier monographs on the bats and rodents, and an equally valuable tool, for systematists and field naturalists alike, for many years to come.

A useful general introduction covers the classification, structure and way of life of carnivores, and the keys to identification of the various taxa are clear and practical. The systematic section, occupying the bulk of the book, is well set out with a synonymy for each species and sections dealing with distribution (the absence of distribution maps is a matter for regret), description (with a special section for the skull and dentition), habits, and taxonomy. A new genet species, *Genetta bini*, is described and two new subspecies of *Herpestes ichneumon*. Formal treatment of subspecies is rather inconsistent, but the author's taxonomic outlook is refreshingly modern and sensible. A very useful glossary of terms is appended, as well as notes on vegetation in the area covered, and a comprehensive bibliography and index; the use of a different type for scientific names would have made the last easier to use. Rita Parsons's twelve colour plates are exquisite, the line drawings of skulls clear and useful, although the method of shading is not always artistically pleasing. The generally high standard of production and absence of typographical errors is notable and praiseworthy.

In summary this is a most valuable work, a veritable mine of information, for which the author deserves great credit, and an essential addition to the libraries of both institutions and specialists in the field of African mammalogy. It is greatly to be hoped that the series will eventually be completed by treatment of the remaining groups of West African terrestrial mammals.

D. L. HARRISON

Portraits in the Wild, by Cynthia Ross. Hamish Hamilton, £5.95.

The author sets out to provide a synoptic and factually accurate account of what is currently known about the behaviour of fifteen common species of large animals in East Africa. Our knowledge in this field has increased dramatically within the last ten years, thanks to an unprecedented influx of scientists and funds for a wide range of ethological studies, many of which have reached high standards. The large quantity of information now available is scattered, however, and the task of digesting and collating it requires someone who is not only a practising ethologist, with first-hand knowledge of the subject, but also a professional writer able to handle unwieldy masses of facts and opinions with adroitness and assurance. Miss Ross has both these attributes and has produced an uncommonly good book, authoritative and well written, which describes the main behavioural characteristics of each species in some detail, and also in such a way as to deepen and reinforce one's feeling for the animal as a fellow creature whose life, however much it differs, is still shaped by many of the same compulsions as our own. The marvellous variety, complexity and subtlety of the behavioural mechanisms which link animals to one another and to their environment, must strike every reader, and leave him looking forward eagerly to the next opportunity of recognising such behaviour in the field for himself, helped by the excellent photographs selected for this purpose.

For an old-fashioned naturalist, the fact that over 90 per cent of the extensive bibliography is post-1960 is a humbling reminder of how little systematic information had been recorded before the advent of the ethologists with their modern

disciplines, and also, let it be said, the finances which made long-term intensive studies possible. We used to see more animals, but it was an experience impoverished in some degree, by ignorance. This ignorance Cynthia Ross clearly sees as a challenge to be met.

JOHN OWEN

Fallow Deer, by Donald and Norma Chapman. Terence Dalton, £7.80.

This is a very readable and comprehensive review of fallow deer history, distribution and biology. In addition to the inevitable chapters on classification, anatomy, antlers, reproduction, social organisation and behaviour, ecology and mortality, there is an exhaustive examination of the fossil and early history of the fallow deer (including that hoary topic of who actually introduced it to Britain) and a concluding chapter on the Persian fallow deer to delight the international conservationist. The book is not only profusely but also sensibly illustrated, in that most of the plates depict, very clearly, anatomical and other features referred to in the text.

Fallow must be one of the most widely introduced deer in the world, and the chapter on distribution traces the species's past and present whereabouts over the five major continents. The subject is a dynamic one. A recent report to IUCN suggests that the fallow deer in Sardinia may already be extinct. On the other side of the coin, a recent fallow-deer survey in Turkey has identified a third population in an area north of Adana that has been accorded reserve status.

The authors endeavour to define and to identify the causes of fraying and thrashing (the term they use) of vegetation by bucks in antler. But the text and accompanying illustrations suggest that they still haven't got it quite right! If similar behaviour in red deer is any indication, the damage to the saplings shown in the plate on page 129 was not caused by fraying (the deer would never use trees of such large diameters for this purpose), but by body rubbing, principally of the face and neck, in which antler scores on the bark are apparently incidental. The suggestion that a great deal of thrashing occurs long after the rut is certainly confirmed by red deer behaviour in the eastern Scottish highlands.

The chapter on ecology gives lucid and convincing arguments on the need for sound deer management, and the authors have clearly scoured the literature to provide a useful review of the causes of mortality and the diseases and parasites that afflict fallow deer. All in all, they are to be congratulated on having brought together a considerable and wide range of information.

COLIN W. HOLLOWAY

Collins Encyclopaedia of Animals. Introduction by Desmond Morris. Collins, £15.

This magnificent volume of 640 pages is based on *La Vie des Animaux*, published by La Librairie Larousse in 1969. The text has been contributed by fifteen of France's most distinguished zoologists under the guidance of Pierre-Paul Grasse, member of the French Institute. The present edition has been adapted for an English-speaking readership with the help of A. R. Waterston, Keeper Emeritus of Natural History at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

This is in the true sense an encyclopaedia, and not merely the alphabetical catalogue of animals that sometimes appears under such a title. The animal groups are dealt with in a systematic order, starting with unicellular organisms and proceeding through the natural subdivisions of the animal world to the primates. In each group structure, classification, habitat, life-cycles and in most cases distribution are dealt with, and where appropriate topics such as dimorphism, parasitism, mimicry, defensive mechanisms and behaviour are discussed in some detail. For the general reader one would have liked to see more indications of species on the endangered list. As might be expected of such a team of authors, the text is authoritative and up-to-date but written in a pleasant discursive style, as clear of technical