

genus. The species accounts provide information on taxonomy, distribution, habitat, habits, food and reproduction. Each account also has an excellent distribution map covering the entire known range. The text is complemented by 38 excellent colour plates illustrating every species and is also enhanced by numerous line drawings.

The book will be invaluable to a wide variety of people. The text is scientific but sufficiently readable to be of interest to non-scientists and the comprehensive bibliography is of value in its own right. This will be the standard reference work for the mammals of the region for many years to come and despite the relatively high price it represents excellent value for money.

*Simon Mickleburgh.*

***Wild Cat Species of the World*** (Basset Publications, Plymouth, 1991, ISBN 0 946873 93 3, 163 pp., SB £12.50) is a handy reference book written by Richard Green, an experienced zoo keeper and wild animals manager. After a brief introduction to the characteristics of the felid family, he treats each species separately, covering vital statistics, description, distribution, habitat, habits, breeding, development of young, status and systematics, ending with the International Species Indexing System (ISIS) numbers for the species and subspecies.

Green uses Hemmer's classification of the Felidae into 37 species, except for treating the Eurasian wild cat *Felis silvestris* and the African wild cat *F. lybica* as separate species rather than as subspecies. Whatever the views of various taxonomists, this is useful for reference because of the differences that exist in characteristics, range and habitat. This applies equally to

treating the lynx group as separate species.

Green includes the mysterious onza of the Sierra Madre Occidentale in Mexico, noting that it has 'not been fully accepted in scientific circles'. Length, weight and dental formula are taken from a 4-year-old female, alleged onza taken in Mexico in 1986. They are within the parameters of puma *F. concolor*, but several physical characteristics are said to distinguish the onza. It needs investigation by leading taxonomists.

Given how little is known in detail about cats in the wild, some statements in this book can be challenged, but that does not detract from its overall value.

*Peter Jackson.*

## Fish

***Fishes of the Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea*** by John E. Randall, Gerald R. Allen and Roger C. Steene (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1991, ISBN 0 8248 1346 4, 564 pp., HB \$US60) is stunningly illustrated by the underwater photographs of Roger Steene and beautiful fish paintings by Roger Swainson. There is information on more than 1100 species, approximately 95 per cent of those known in the region.

Following the style of some of Randall's previous books, it contains a map, a general introduction, and family and species descriptions. There is a quick reference guide to 106 families and the introduction outlines some of the features of a coral reef, the study area, some of the threats it faces and some of the measures taken to protect this heritage. Some of the species listed are widely distributed in tropical oceans so the book will

also be useful outside its intended geographical range.

Information is summarized for each family and individual species are described, giving common and scientific names, distinguishing characteristics, distribution, some information on habitat preferences and abundance, and synonyms. For species with morphologically different phases separate photographs are included to aid in their identification. It would, however, have been useful to add subheadings throughout the text to make it easier for the reader to find information on specific topics.

Until recently, the most easily available information on marine and coral fishes has been restricted to commercial species. Now there is a growing awareness of the plight of marine fishes, in particular, those species that occur in the aquarium trade. It would have been extremely useful, therefore, to find more information on abundance as well as status in the wild, because we can no longer assume that marine fishes are safe just because they occur in such a vast area. The lack of this type of information in a book of this kind probably reflects our current state of knowledge regarding marine fishes in general. Considerable efforts are being made by international groups to address this problem. Nevertheless, in spite of this criticism, this new publication is extremely timely and will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to our present knowledge of coral reef fishes world-wide.

*Patricia Almada-Villela.*

Richard Fitter apologizes that in his review of Colin Willock's book (*Oryx*, 26, 54) he overlooked the account of the vicuña saga in Peru on pages 126–127.