

**Wild Deer in Britain, by Roy A. Harris and K.R. Duff. David & Charles, £2.50.**

This is an admirable introductory guide to the six species of feral deer in Britain, with superb photographs which comprise more than half the 112 pages. All ages of both sexes are beautifully portrayed (unfortunately not in colour), but for the knowledgeable the book is worth a place in the library for the photographs alone.

A chapter devoted to each species includes description, distribution (a map would have helped here), social and territorial behaviour and life-cycle. Some generalisations could be confusing – for instance, 'The sika is a large deer', followed by the size for red and muntjac, leaving the puzzled reader to find out how large in a later chapter. A list giving nomenclature for males and females of the different species is a great help; even so-called experts often get this wrong. A chapter on antlers describes their growth and terminology, and the possible reasons for them. Particularly useful is the information on the little-known Chinese water deer which has hitherto received comparatively little attention.

The final chapter deals with management and conservation problems – the effects of damage to forestry and agriculture when populations are allowed to over-increase, and control methods.

J.A. WILLET

**If Deer are to Survive, by William Dasmann. Stackpole Books, \$4.95.**

**The Tule Elk, by Dale R. McCullough. University of California Press, \$10.75 (£5.15)**

William Dasmann's book is clearly intended for a fairly wide audience of interested observers on the deer management scene. It provides a good summary of literature on the forage, water and cover requirements of deer, based on North American experience (only three of the 184 citations originate from outside North America), but the author is not especially critical of his data and quite a lot of references date from the 1940s and 1950s. My main criticism, however, is that, apart from a vague comment on the problems of social stress induced by overcrowding, virtually no reference is made to deer behaviour, its influence on population densities and spatial arrangement, or its application to management practices. In summary, a useful review of basic principles in deer management that, regrettably, rarely rises above basics.

The tule elk is listed as a rare species in both the IUCN and US Red Data Books. It was numerous in California until the gold rush of 1849, but was apparently reduced to a single group by 1870. As a result of protection and a series of translocations, the elk currently has an over-wintering population of some 400 animals, comprising one group in an enclosure (the Tupman herd) and two free-ranging groups (in Cache Creek and Owens Valley). Dale McCullough's book is based on an eighteen-month taxonomic and historical review of the elk and a two-year field study, principally in Owens valley. A welcome addition to conventional data on taxonomy, natural history, behaviour and range relations is a chapter on management. There is predictable criticism of the preservationist lobby, and the author considers that, as competition with livestock is limited and the scope for habitat manipulation is small,



**RED DEER FIGHTING** — one of many excellent photographs in *Wild Deer in Britain*, by Roy A Harris and K.R. Duff, reviewed opposite.

the main hope for increase in elk populations lies in expansion into unoccupied range. San Luis Island (8 miles north of Los Banos) is a suitable locality for translocation, and National Forest land adjacent to Mount Whitney could be colonised naturally by elk from Owens valley. This book is likely to find considerable use as a source of reference, but even the most ardent deer enthusiast will find the going hard if he attempts to read its 180 pages through at one sitting.

C.W. HOLLOWAY

### Brief Reviews

*Living Turtles of the World*, by Peter Pritchard, Secretary of the IUCN Turtle Specialist Group, is an invaluable, comprehensive and readable reference book, with detailed descriptions of every known tortoise and turtle, profusely illustrated with good photographs, both in colour (over 100) and black and white. Published in 1967 (but not reviewed in *Oryx*) by TFH Publications, Nutley Lane, Reigate, Surrey, £5.

*Australian Finches*, by Klaus Immelmann (Angus & Robertson, £3.30), is an old book with a virtually new text. The title and plates, eight of them in colour, come from Neville Cayley's well known book published in 1932. The text, by a new author, is almost all new. It is valuable to have it revised in the light of modern knowledge.

The Council for Nature's useful *Directory of Natural History and Nature Conservation Films* for hire and free loan is now in a second revised edition (30p from the Council, c/o Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, London, NW1 4RY).

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