

REVIEWS

CAVEAT INTRODUTOR

INTRODUCED MAMMALS OF NEW ZEALAND. By K. A. WODZICKI. Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Bulletin No. 98. 12s. 6d.

In his foreword, the Secretary of the Department of Scientific Research calls the survey covered by this book the first extensive animal ecology investigation made in New Zealand. These words give a clue to the scientific value of this book; they give no hint of its great interest to the lay reader, nor to its readability.

To make possible an understanding of the tremendous impact of the arrival of the European on the fauna of New Zealand, Dr. Wodzicki, quoting Lack (1947), states that each natural species fills an ecological niche to which it is confined by the pressure of other species. The native species of New Zealand, having evolved virtually without the pressure of predators, suddenly had to face not only predators, new diseases, and new parasites but competition for food with introduced animals: the introduced animals, on the other hand, sometimes found their controls relaxed. Even more important, the European converted more and more land to his own use, often changing it to the sort of country to which the species he had brought with him were accustomed. Native species, faced with new enemies, found also that the kind of country to which they were adapted was disappearing. Many native species have vanished, many introduced species have found conditions so favourable that they have become a serious problem to man who introduced them. Man has attempted to solve this problem by bringing in yet other species to destroy those which have multiplied excessively, but he has done so without the knowledge to foretell what effect this further attack on the ecological balance might have.

After describing the method he used in the survey upon which this book is founded, Dr. Wodzicki shows how the exotic colonization of New Zealand may be divided into four periods, starting with the settlement of the country by the Maoris, and finishing with the present period during which acclimatization efforts have been discontinued and there has been an awakening of public opinion to the need for conservation.

It was during the third stage that the most important damage to the native fauna and flora was done, for it was then that

acclimatization was at its height. This is markedly shown by an extract from an 1864 Customs Ordinance which allowed the free import of horses, mules, asses, sheep, and *all other livestock and live animals*. But, as Dr. Wodzicki points out, it must be remembered that the early settlers found no indigenous mammals to supply them with food; their chief concern was to build up a potential food supply.

Having written of the present position of mammals and birds in general, having described the organization of wild life control and made an estimate of its cost, Dr. Wodzicki turns to the introduced mammals in detail. He tells the story of each animal's spread, of protective legislation changing to severe control. He compares, for example, the economic value of skins with the damage to indigenous and introduced vegetation. The rabbit, red deer and opossum are the hardest problem but such diverse animals as hedgehog, weasel, wild horse, moose and pig are dealt with. This analysis, clearly and simply illustrated with tables and maps, comprises the greater part of the book. Not one of the mammals introduced and released is found on balance to have been an advantage.

Let me conclude this review of an admirable book with the words quoted from Graham: "When a species is introduced into an area where it has not lived before, it is almost impossible to foretell the consequences, although it is quite probable that it will either succeed gloriously or eventually fail entirely."

Let the introducer beware.

C. L. B.

COLLECTING REASONABLY

TANDALLA. By Count G. AHLEFELDT-BILLE, Chief Game Warden of Denmark. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 25s.

In 1947 Count Ahlefeldt-Bille led the Danish-East African Scientific Expedition to collect scientific and ethnographical material for Danish museums.

Tandalla (the native name for the Greater Kudu) is not a report on every aspect of the expedition but is a pleasant general account of the safari in Kenya and northern Tanganyika. Of the country, its animals and people, the author draws an intimate picture easily imagined by readers who are unfamiliar with the face of East Africa. He gives interesting details of the daily life and customs of the native tribes he encountered, with clear drawings of their huts and household possessions.

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