

Book Reviews

Wildlife Crisis, by HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and James Fisher. Hamish Hamilton £4.20.

Different people arrive at conviction of the need for conservation by different routes and this is nowhere better illustrated than by the way in which the authors of this important book approach the problem.

Prince Philip is a convert. In his frank and very personal apologia, he tells us that his boyhood was free from any 'bug-hunting' proclivities. It was travel and photography that aroused his interest in nature; then, taking a hard look at the threat to environment posed by the population explosion combined with the equally violent technological explosion, he saw the need for conservation on a scale commensurate with the danger. He has worked at it ever since. He fears that his motives are somewhat selfish because of his love of bird photography, although, with his advantages, he at least should be able to find wildernesses as long as he can click a shutter. His toughly argued essay is essentially a passionate plea to save this earth of ours for the generations to come. And he wants action, not talk.

The late James Fisher's approach was different. He was born in the faith. Nature was his world and moulded his life. His scholarly contribution is crammed with facts ranging from earliest prehistory to the latest Countryside Act. He brings his great learning to bear in a long historical dissertation on conservation in its broadest sense. This is followed by separate chapters dealing with the present wildlife situation in fifteen regions of the world. James Fisher left us a message of hope. 'As master of the earth', he wrote, 'man has shown himself capable of global lunacy, but capable too of high altruism'. With his vast knowledge of the problems of conservation, he had few illusions but he ended on the fighting note: 'We cannot afford to be pessimists'.

There is a most useful section on the extinct and endangered species and the book contains copious illustrations and maps.

G. T. CORLEY SMITH

The Flying Syringe, by A. M. Harthoorn. Bles, £3.50

The sub-title of this book, *Ten Years of Immobilising Wild Animals in Africa*, describes its subject; the main title indicates the treatment – popular, or, perhaps more accurately, not over-technical. The result is a very readable, interesting and well-illustrated account of a series of projects, most of which will have come to the notice of FPS members but which are here spelled out in detail as a consecutive story. As a bonus we get some idea of the hard graft – the trials and tribulations – of research, in this case research to find safe drugs and fool-proof techniques for immobilising a remarkable variety of animals in order to study or doctor them, or move them from one place to another.

The book starts off in the Semliki in Uganda, moves on to the translocation of the Lugari kob from Kenya to Tanzania, describes the Kariba problem and Operation Noah, discusses rhino relocation in South Africa and gives details of work on antelopes, lions, zebra, elephants and buffalo. There is a chapter on biotelemetry, another on 'The Purpose of it all', and one 'In Defence of Elephants' – particularly those in the Tsavo Park in Kenya.