

by reintroduction. Using the Arabian oryx *Oryx leucoryx* as his exemplar, Mark Stanley Price here examines, scientifically, the problems of reintroducing animals into the wild. His qualification for so doing is unequalled, for he himself directed the first known project whereby an animal that had become extinct in the wild was successfully reintroduced there as a self-sustaining breeding stock. He warns, however, that the 20 years that elapsed between 1972, when the Arabian oryx was exterminated in the wild and its successful return to the Jiddat-al-Harasis in central Oman, may prove to have been misleadingly short. Future attempts may well take much longer.

The Oman project was first conceived only two years after the extinction. It was proposed by the Ruler of Oman, H M Sultan Qaboos bin Said, planned with military precision by his conservation advisor, Col Ralph Daly, and carried out with scrupulous scientific care and attention to detail by Dr Stanley Price, who had been researching the domesticated beisa oryx of the Galana Game Ranch Research Project in Kenya. In this book he describes meticulously the immense and time-consuming undertaking that led to the project's success. It was scientifically planned all the way. He also gives an extremely valuable scientific assessment of the problems facing those who seek to repeat this success with other species. Indeed, it would be irresponsible to commit any substantial conservation resources to the reintroduction of any land vertebrate without taking into account the scientific considerations advanced here.

For it is clear that a large element of uncovenanted good

fortune attended the success of the project. Dr Stanley Price believes that FPS's Operation Oryx, which made the whole enterprise possible, was carried out in the last year in which it had a reasonable chance of success—at one point it was nearly postponed when one of its main backers withdrew. It is clear too that without the foresight and determination of an enlightened Ruler, this very complex project, involving prolonged negotiations with local tribesmen, foreign zoos, international scientists and conservationists, and many others, would never have got off the ground. Moreover, Dr Stanley Price believes it was a mistake to dissolve the World Herd Trustees so soon. Their continued existence would certainly have solved some of the problems the Oman Government had to face. And behind this lies another mistake: IUCN and WWF International should both have been initial trustees. Nevertheless the Sultan and his men brought off a great triumph, a triumph in which the FPS had played a key part, not only by sponsoring Operation Oryx, but also in sticking to it when a more faint-hearted society might have faltered.

*Richard Fitter.*

### **Lemurs of Madagascar and the Comoros: The IUCN Red Data Book**

*C. Harcourt and J. Thornback*  
IUCN, Gland and Cambridge, 1990, 248 pp, £18/\$US36 plus postage (add 15% for UK, 17.5% for overseas surface and 40% for airmail), available from IUCN Publications Service Unit, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK.

This latest volume in the IUCN Red Data Book series provides

the most up-to-date and comprehensive review available on the conservation status of lemurs. A detailed account is provided for all Madagascar's species, giving information on distribution, population status, habitat, ecology, threats, conservation action, captive breeding and a bibliography. There are black and white photographs of nearly all species and distribution maps.

*Editor.*

### **International Zoo Yearbook 28**

*Edited by P. J. S. Olney and Pat Ellis*

Zoological Society of London, 1989, 557 pp., HB £48.50, \$US 82.45, SB £43.00, \$US 73.10

A substantial part of volume 28 of the *International Zoo Yearbook* deals with the latest work on reptiles and amphibians in zoos and zoological institutions. It comprises 40 papers from the world's leading herpetologists dealing with a diverse range of topics, and species, from reproduction and behaviour to the management of captive populations, conservation problems and reintroduction into the wild.

Section 2 consists of 14 papers on the management and breeding of birds and mammals in collections and Section 3 comprises the annual world-wide census of animals bred in zoos, the census of rare animals held in zoos and an up-to-date list of all International Studbooks. There is also a 97-page directory of zoos and aquaria around the world.

This excellent publication, well illustrated with photographs and diagrams, is an invaluable reference work for anyone interested in zoology or conservation.

*Editor.*