

A POPULATION STUDY OF PENGUINS. By L. E. RICHDALE. Oxford University Press, 1957. 195 pages, 2 plates. 42s.

Dr. Richdale's book is concerned mainly with his research on the Yellow-eyed Penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes*) of New Zealand. In many respects it replaces his earlier study, *Sexual Behaviour in Penguins*, although the two together form a unique record of long-term investigations into the life and habits of a species. For eighteen consecutive seasons the author has investigated in detail the breeding activities of a marked population; he is now in the enviable position of being able to describe his species in terms acceptable both to the general zoologist and to the more statistically-minded student of population dynamics.

The magnitude and scope of the work is effectively shown in the titles of some of the statistical tables—"Annual Fate of 737 Mated Pairs of Yellow-eyed Penguins", "Influence of Age on Fertility of 581 Female Penguins," "Breeding Status of 184 Two-year-old and 120 Three-year-old Penguins." Every aspect of the breeding cycle is described and tabulated, the growth and mortality of chicks and juveniles is investigated, and a separate chapter is devoted to the composition of the community as a whole, in terms of age groups. In some cases Dr. Richdale is able to draw on evidence from several generations, comparing for instance deviations from the mean in laying dates of grandmother, mother, daughter, granddaughter and great-granddaughter.

Comparisons are made with other species of penguins wherever the literature allows, and with other species of sea birds which the author has studied personally. That this is not an easy book to read is not the fault of the author; few books of its size contain so much fascinating material. The writing is straightforward and every term is explained, the tables are clear and the index is unusually thorough.

B. S.

THE REPTILE WORLD. By CLIFFORD H. POPE. Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1956. £2 10s.

This is probably the most comprehensive account of the reptiles that could be included in a book of three hundred and twenty-five pages. It is certainly one of the best general books on this subject that has been produced in recent years.

The introductory chapters are clear and concise, the layman should have no difficulty in following. Critics on this side of the

Atlantic might be justified in calling attention to the lengthy treatment of some of the New World species and the dismissal, in a few lines, of some from the Old World. Of course, this is an American book and one expects that the American species should be given precedence—but surely, Mr. Pope, we know something about some of ours?

Altogether the *Reptile World* is an excellent book. The author says that it is intended for laymen but his systematic treatment, excellent photographs and comprehensive bibliographies will make it just as valuable to professionals.

J. I. M.

ALWAYS LIGHTLY TREAD. By E. CRONJE WILMOT. Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 16s. 6d.

An American, Mr. Tex McRorey of the Zoological Society of San Diego, wrote of this book: "Mr. Wilmot lifted the curtain and allowed me to have a long look into that vast and stupendous region of sand, deltas, pans and endless rivers."

Those of us who know Ngamiland will be the first to agree that Mr. Wilmot—Uncle Willie, as he is known to one and all in these parts—has succeeded in painting an authentic and fascinating picture of this remote part of the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

Uncle Willie himself, with his keen blue eyes, white hair and lean, sprightly figure, is respected and well loved, and we were all delighted to learn that he intended writing his reminiscences; for so few who have trodden these remote wastelands have attempted to describe them. He is a skilled and experienced observer with a very wide knowledge of the flora and fauna of the African bushveld. His descriptions are accurate and he writes as one who loves the veld and understands it. Moreover, some of his adventures are really exciting.

Both the editing and the illustrations, so full of life and character, are by C. Astley-Maberly, who is to be congratulated on a most valuable contribution.

Even the most critical and experienced African traveller will find in this book much that is new and interesting. It is no mere hunter's tale.

J. M.