

### **Ethiopian Episode, by Leslie Brown. Country Life, 42s.**

In a brief postscript to this book, the author remarks—"It will still be a long up-hill haul to conserve wildlife in Ethiopia, but the position is much more encouraging today (1965) than it was when I made my expedition to Semien and Bale in late 1963".

That this should be so—and no-one who has read Leslie Brown's forthright as well as highly entertaining story would attribute to him a tendency to wishful thinking—is not least due to the expeditions he so vividly describes, following closely as they so fortunately did on the first approaches of IUCN, FAO and UNESCO.

These expeditions were directed primarily to a reconnaissance of two of the "specialities" of the Ethiopian fauna, the walia ibex and the mountain nyala. Both these magnificent animals have had to be included in the IUCN Survival Service Commission's "Red Book" of endangered species, but information about them was out of date and unreliable, and it is now accepted that a status survey is a prerequisite of effective measures for the conservation of a species. When it can be carried out by someone with Leslie Brown's sharp eye for the whole environment, the purposes of conservation are well served indeed.

Few naturalists have penetrated far into the wide and attractive spaces between Ethiopia's main lines of communication (for some stretches of which the term 'road' is still apparently somewhat complimentary). It is particularly enjoyable and exciting, therefore, to be able in this book to accompany one so skilled at presenting the scene with pen and camera, sharing only vicariously the discomforts and frustrations, yet savouring to the full the delight of discovery and achievement. The door of the Ethiopian wildlife treasure house is opened for an enviable view of its diminished but still spectacular contents—ibex and nyala, Semien fox, Gelada baboon and colobus, lammergeier and eagle owl, wattled crane and wattled ibis, and many another jewel in its superb setting. We may indeed hope that the custodians of these treasures will not allow them to be eroded away or thoughtlessly lost, but will take pride in safeguarding and making them available for the admiration of the world.

HUGH F. I. ELLIOTT.

### **Samba and the Monkey Mind, by Leonard Williams. Bodley Head, 21s.**

Having kept woolly monkeys myself, I know how delightful these South American prehensile-tailed species can be, and my pleasure at being asked to review this book was more than doubled when I had read Leonard Williams' account of his little colony kept under the only conditions likely to produce health, vigour and really natural activities. The author is a musician; and whatever the world of music has gained from his skill the world of animal behaviour studies has lost—or has it?—for this is one of the best books about "captive animals" I have ever read. It contains everything that such a work should include: acute observation, sane interpretation of what has been noted, and a true sympathy with the animal mind unspoiled by sentimentality. It is also truly scientific in the best sense of the word, even though there are welcome touches of humour throughout. Some of the author's views may upset the theorists, but that is sometimes to the good. If only all our behaviour pundits could write as clearly and with such an absence of jargon, all who are truly interested in what animals do, and why, would profit. Mr. Williams is a little hard on zoos, perhaps, for the best of them are going forward on the very lines he himself advocates, but some of his comments on menagerie management of monkeys are justified.

All serious students of animal behaviour, and all who teach this complex subject, should read this absorbing account of Samba and her companions. But one final word of caution: with the present day accent on conservation,

I trust that those without the knowledge or the proper facilities will not be lured into keeping monkeys; they are *not* pets that the novice should seek to own.

MAXWELL KNIGHT.

**Men and Snakes, by Ramona & Desmond Morris.** Hutchinson, 50s.

One expects something good from the versatile zoologist Desmond Morris—also an accomplished painter—and his talented wife, and this most interesting and informative production does not disappoint. Aptly described as “not just a book about snakes”, but a discourse “on the odd relationship that has developed between man and snake”, they call urgently for “a more sympathetic attitude towards a much used and much abused but nevertheless absorbing and remarkable creature”. The research entailed in their masterly exposition of a vast subject, world-wide in coverage, must have been tremendous.

The response to a questionnaire addressed to some thousands of juveniles produced some rather gloomy statistics of snake-hate; nevertheless one is aware that increasing numbers of the young generation are more and more taking a keen and very welcome interest in the study of snakes, and this fascinating and thorough account of the reptilian story from every possible aspect is particularly opportune. It should encourage a lively interest in what many still regard as an unwholesome subject, and help to halt some senseless persecution. The presentation is skilful and the illustrations delightful; altogether an attractive, exceptionally readable and highly recommended book.

C. R. S. PITMAN.

**Town Fox, Country Fox, by Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald.** Deutsch, 25s.

Another of the “Survival” series of books on British animals, this one discusses most aspects of the life of the fox in this country in the author’s familiar easy style. Various writers on the life and habits of the animal are quoted at some length, but on more than one occasion the author expresses his doubts or dissension; and if it is sometimes simply a case of one personal opinion against another, this gives point to his comment that there is still a good deal to be learnt about some details of Reynard’s life. He gives reasons for thinking that the fox is achieving not only “survival” but increase. From the old records, or lack of them, he infers that foxes were nowhere plentiful in this country in the late 18th and early 19th century; with the boom in fox-hunting it became necessary to import thousands from the Continent. The statistics quoted suggest forcibly how numerous the animal is today, not only in the country, but in suburbs and sometimes even well within large towns. There is a bibliography, which, however, *inter alia* omits *The Handbook of British Mammals*.

COLIN MATHESON.

**The Harvest That Kills, by John Coleman-Cooke.** Odhams, 25s.

There can no longer be any naturalist or farmer in this country, or indeed anyone interested in the countryside, who has not heard something of the arguments about the persistent organo-chlorine compounds such as dieldrin, aldrin and heptachlor. On the other hand, too few people have any real knowledge of the size of the problem, of the great benefits which the use of chemicals has bestowed on mankind in the fight against disease and hunger, and of the ever growing danger which the Nature Conservancy have described as “the poisoning of our whole environment.”