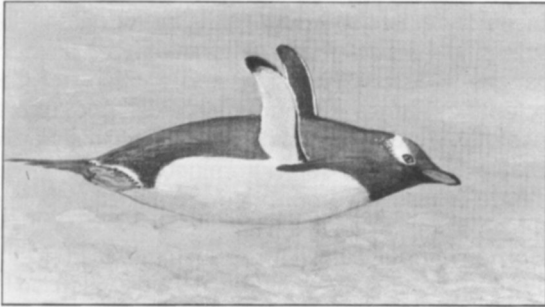


Book reviews



Adelie penguin swimming underwater at Hope Bay, Antarctic Peninsula (from Peter Scott's *Travel Diaries of a Naturalist*).

identity of Captain Cook's kangaroo'. But it is for the plates that most people will want to buy it.
John A. Burton

Latin American Wildlife Trade Laws

Kathryn S. Fuller and Byron Swift
World Wildlife Fund—US \$11.50 from TRAFFIC (USA),
1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20009,
USA

Containing over 350 pages of facts in Spanish and English, this is not an easy book to check factually, apart from scattered misspellings of scientific names, which are inevitable in a compilation such as this. Anyone working in any connection with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora will find this an absolute goldmine of information. National legislation is summarised, country by country, and the protected species are listed.

Although the primary task of the TRAFFIC Group is to assemble data, it would have been useful in this work to have had a little more interpretation—most of its users are going to need considerable help and guidance. In particular, it would have been useful to have information as to whether or not each country fully complies with CITES. My reading of the summaries was that very few South American countries are taking effective steps to control the trade in wild plants, for instance. However, as is made clear, this is the first step in an on-going project, and modern information retrieval systems are ideally suited to providing regular updates. The compilers are to be congratulated; let us hope that governments and their enforcement agencies use it.

John A. Burton
Book reviews

Riches of the Rain Forest

W. Veevers-Carter
Oxford University Press, 1984, S\$36.50

From cover to cover of *Riches of the Rain Forest*, Wendy Veevers-Carter leads the reader intelligently through the biological complexities of the Malesian region's major natural community. The approach is that of a rather factual introduction; yet it is never dull, and the breadth of the writer's education is obvious on every page. English, Latin, Malay and Indonesian names mingle easily in the text, and even the Greek origin of the dipterocarps' name—the huge dipterocarp trees comprise the dominant family of the South-East Asian forests—is explained. (The name comes from the Greek for 'two-winged seed': *dis pteron karpos*.) When describing the genus *Eugenia*, which includes the clove, the author shows how the local names, which are presumably ancient, reflect commonly accepted scientific taxonomy: a phenomenon that is a lot more widespread in the tropics than most people realize.

Trees that are important to animals, such as the many figs, and plants of more commercial note, such as the rattans, the hardwood trees and numerous fruit trees, are among those that are described sufficiently to give their essential 'flavour' and, hopefully, to excite the interest of many readers to learn more. Some of the narratives lead to fascinating digressions, among which my favourite is the reference to the improbably named Monsieur Pierre Poivre, an eighteenth century French botanist with a keen interest in spices. Even Captain Bligh of the *Bounty* manages to make an appearance in this book, due to the fact that his ship was carrying breadfruit seedlings on its ill-fated voyage.

All this, and yet there are also easy explanations of topics from gene pools and coevolution to soil quality and poisons in plants! Nevertheless, this is a gentle introduction, strongly to be recommended for those whose knowledge of the rain forest is minimal and whose interest may yet be latent. It is illustrated throughout by the superb artistry of Mohamed Anwar of the Bogor Herbarium, and my only real criticism of the book is that he has been grossly under-credited with nothing more than a mention in the Acknowledgments. Without doubt, the combined work of

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writer and artist will educate as well as entertain, and so will play a role in the argument for the preservation of at least a part of the world's rapidly diminishing rain forests.

Michael Kavanagh, WWF Malaysia

The Hummingbirds of North America

Paul A. Johnsgard

Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983, £26.00

Hummingbirds, because of their many unique characteristics, have a great appeal to ornithologists and others interested in natural history, especially botanists; the latter because of the co-evolution, or mutual adaptations, that have occurred between hummingbirds and the flowers at which they feed.

About two-thirds of this attractive book is an account of the 23 species of hummingbird found in America north of the Mexican border. For each species there is a distribution map and a synopsis of present knowledge well laid out under side-headings such as identification, movements, foraging behaviour (including floral ecology) and breeding biology. This makes reference easy and concise. For anyone visiting North America, this book will provide a satisfying hummingbird handbook as there is sufficient detail to check one's own observations against previous ones. Identification is enhanced and aided by 16 full-page water colour illustrations by James McClelland. Where there is sexual dimorphism, both male and female are illustrated and all are depicted perched or in flight, foraging at their native flowering plants. The proportions and colouring of the hummingbirds are excellent, except for the wings, which are mostly shown too pale.

The weakest section of the book is the six chapters on the comparative biology of all the species of hummingbirds, most of which are tropical. There is no original material here, but a re-statement of the research or even anecdotes of other authors. Re-statements are seldom as meaningful as the original, and may on occasion be misleading through errors of interpretation or by excessive condensing of complex facts.

There are six excellent appendices, which include an up-to-date classification of the 342 humming-

bird species of the world, giving both English and scientific names and a brief statement of their ranges, a list of the origin and meaning of the scientific names of hummingbirds, and, most usefully, a classified list of North American plants that are adapted for hummingbird pollination. There is also a complicated identification guide which seems difficult to use.

Barbara Snow, British Museum (Natural History)

Our Green and Living World

E.S. Ayensu, V.H. Heywood, G.L. Lucas and

R.A. DeFilipps

Cambridge University Press, 1984, £12.95

In his introduction, Prince Philip writes: 'Noah is said to have built an ark to rescue the animals from the flood. What the writer of Genesis fails to recall is that Noah must also have collected the seeds of all the plants, because without them neither his animals nor his family could possibly have survived'. This lavish book is a celebration of plants, and is an answer to the traditional one-sided view of creation presented by many wildlife books. It helps to strengthen the growing realisation that our cuddly animals cannot survive without an infrastructure of plants.

It has spectacular illustrations and a text which is a pleasure to read. There is plenty of information on plants and their ways, but the bias is always towards the uses of plants to mankind—the reasons, in fact, why Noah would have stored their seeds in the ark. The traditional uses of plants for a variety of purposes must continue in the underdeveloped world as an alternative to expensive, resource-intensive manufactured products, while neglected or new crops must be investigated to provide all nations with renewable sources of raw materials. Such sustainable use of species to support both rural communities and industries is one of the aims of the World Conservation Strategy.

Spelling out this aim in such an attractive form as this book is admirable, but I find myself unable to agree with the authors' optimism that there is time to halt and reverse the increasing tide of destruction to the world's vegetation on a significant scale. With massive goodwill from many people, starvation is being kept at bay in just one of Africa's drought-stricken countries. Will the effort

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