

Book Reviews

Problems in Management of Locally Abundant Wild Mammals, edited by P.A. Jewell and S. Holt. Academic Press, £15.50.

This book mostly concerns the arguments that arise in the management of national parks as to whether active intervention or ecological processes should control the numbers of large mammals in them. It arose out of a workshop sponsored by the International Fund for Animal Welfare in Massachusetts in 1980.

We are unlikely to come to any firm consensus on scientific grounds as to whether or not active intervention (which realistically usually means shooting animals) is justified in management. Graeme Caughley, whose paper on 'Over-population' serves to set the scene for the rest of the volume, clearly feels that ecosystems should be left to find their own equilibria. Other distinguished contributors, such as R.M. Laws, who writes on 'Feeding Strategies and Over-abundance', point to the advantages of control in certain circumstances. As Caughley points out, the trend in the last decade has been towards a reduction of intervention, except in southern Africa, where parks are managed fairly heavily. Six of the 19 chapters deal with African cases, both in southern and eastern Africa, and several others refer extensively to that continent, so the reader has a good opportunity to make comparisons.

Besides the chapters on terrestrial herbivores, there are interesting contributions on the leopard, marine carnivores and theoretical issues, but space does not permit further discussion.

This is a book which all wildlife managers should read, and which many ecologists will find of deep interest. The general reader may find its combination of case studies and theory at once both too pragmatic and too theoretical. Nevertheless, I recommend it. The book is economically produced from photo-ready typescript and is good value in today's terms.

NIGEL BONNER

The History of Modern Whaling, by J.N. Tonnessen and A.O. Johnsen. C. Hurst and Co., £19.50.

The original of this excellent English translation by R.I. Christophersen was published in four volumes in the period 1959–70. The present book is a shortened version but is none the less a first-rate account. This history begins in the 1860s when the hunting of the blue whale and all its smaller close relatives, except the minke, began. The steam- and diesel-powered catcher-boats were equipped with a cannon firing an explosive grenade and arrangements to secure and keep afloat the dead whale. It stops a century later as the most recent, and possibly last, phase of Antarctic whaling was beginning – the hunting of minke whales by the Japanese and Soviet expeditions – although data tables and some textual commentary takes us to 1978. There is little either about modern sperm whaling, which features in the current controversy about whaling regulation, or about the small factory-catcher boats which became important in 'pirate whaling' in the 1970s.

The short chapter dealing with the period 1972–78 contains several inaccuracies (an example is the statement that fin whales can now be caught only off Iceland, ignoring the Spanish catching) and is somewhat uncritical of