

REVIEWS

SEEING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE IN OUR NATIONAL REFUGES. By DEVEREUX BUTCHER. New York: The Devin-Adair Company (under the auspices of the Defenders of Furbearers). 1955. \$5.00.

Devereux Butcher is an enthusiastic, well-travelled and exceptionally knowledgeable conservationist whose previous books on North America's National Parks must be known to many British readers. This latest contribution of his will prove essential for anybody intending to visit the United States and see anything of the vast network of nature reserves and wildlife refuges now established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and by private conservation bodies.

Seeing America's Wildlife is, indeed, a guide. Every important refuge is listed, and described (in nearly every case after personal investigation). Mr. Butcher gives us no dull statistical or listy catalogue; but a most intimate and readable account of each place, embellished by a large collection of photographs distinguished not only by their beauty, but by their relevance. Moreover, when refuges are the haven of animals in need of special protection, he gives us a succinct and accurate survey of the history of the species concerned. So his book becomes not merely a guide but an argument—an argument for scientific preservation, presented with scholarship but not (as is the debate of so many scientific conservationists) lacking in warmth or emotion.

Emotion, indeed, is the source of much of Mr. Butcher's strength. He is not afraid unequivocally to attack "killing for fun" (as he heads an essay) in a country where fourteen million hunting licences are issued a year. In North America, as in Britain, it was thought for years that the demands of legitimate sport could be met by scientific conservation, by the development of the refuge system, by the acceptance of sportsmen of control, and by the sportsmen's trust in the integrity of the research upon which control regulations are based. It seems, reading between the lines of Mr. Butcher's book—that sportsmen are increasing too fast for this to be any longer possible. The only salvation of wild life (North America's *and* ours) seems to be the much abused (by sportsmen) natural history society. Unless the nature-watching society can entrap (in a tender way) and pipe off the sated hunter into watching activities, there seems to be little hope of anything left for the watchers to watch and the surviving sportsmen to shoot.

There is a most noticeable present increase of people (many of them newly-leisured and better off than ever before) embracing shooting and wildfowling as a hobby. Refuge administration and protection legislation can be but palliatives, a temporary mud-bank against the approaching flood. Those of us who, like Mr. Butcher, prefer atmosphere to sporting achievement, must dig in, do our administrative best to preserve and increase sanctuaries, and uphold the law and hope that the flood will swing into a new channel. Books like Mr. Butcher's will help to change the climate of public opinion in every civilized country.

In the old days it was the leisured few who, on a fine day, could go out and kill something. Now it is the leisured many. The leisured few did not have to calculate what nature could spare. For the leisured many of to-day certain calculations are made and actions taken by our agencies of conservation and by the Law, to prevent them taking more than nature can now spare. Excellent though these measures are, they can never succeed unless they are backed by the altruistic and self-denying actions of all shooting sportsmen.

My personal view is that, whatever we do with legislation and administration, the future of our wildfowl lies in the hands of the man with the gun, and is unlikely to be safe until he uses that gun for two purposes only—the advancement of science, and the filling of his family's (and nobody else's) cook-pot.

J. F.

AN AUSTRALIAN ANIMAL BOOK. By CHARLES BARRETT.
Oxford University Press. London: Cumberlege £1 7s. 6d.

I will express at once my only regret about this book. The opportunity of this second edition has not been taken to bring it up to date. For example, though there are many fully justified complaints about the terrible destruction of the fauna, there is no word of the conservation bodies, both official and private, which have been doing good work during the last few years; the Fauna Protection Panel of New South Wales for instance was founded in 1948. The plea for the preservation of the wedge-tailed eagle is based largely on its value as a rabbit destroyer; yet though there is a chapter on introduced mammals, there is no mention of the likely effect of myxomatosis which was brought into Australia in 1944. We are told that emus were plentiful in Wyperfeld National Park in 1942, but nothing of their present status there.