

NO ROOM IN THE ARK. By ALAN MOOREHEAD. Hamish Hamilton. 21s.

Those of us who have for many years been devoting our energies to the cause of the preservation of wild animals may well, at times, be slightly guilty of over-stating our case—or at least be suspected of so doing.

This makes Mr. Alan Moorehead's book all the more timely and useful. The author is well known as an author and journalist and it is primarily as a writer that he has given us the absorbing account of his three journeys to Africa in recent years. He modestly disclaims any pretensions to being a naturalist, but his readers will agree that many works from the pens of those who do make such a claim do not necessarily carry more weight than Mr. Moorehead.

His is a very objective account of the crisis that faces wild animals in Africa, and he sees with his trained journalistic eyes the many complicated aspects of this very real problem. One has only to read the chapter that deals with poaching and ivory smuggling to get a fair idea of some of the difficulties that face those dedicated men, the Game Wardens and their staffs. The various references to the vacillations of certain Government departments tell their own tale; and the author does not hesitate to come down bravely on the side of the fast diminishing numbers of wild beasts now threatened with perilous reduction in numbers—if not actual extermination.

The whole book is vividly written, and not the least fascinating parts are those that give us something more than a glimpse into the lives of various African tribes and their customs. The illustrations are excellent, and in all, the book should find its way to the bookshelves of those to whom the future of wild animals means so much.

M. K.

DIE BISAMRATTE. By MAX HOFFMANN. Published by Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Geest and Portig K.-G., Leipzig. 27 DM.

Great Britain's narrow escape from being colonized by escaped musk rats has been described recently by R. S. R. Fitter in *The Ark in Our Midst*. Looking back one can only be amazed that the authorities had failed to take warning from Central Europe, where a tiny handful of musk rats introduced to Bohemia in 1903 had multiplied by 1926 into scores of millions

and overrun vast areas, finally being reckoned a plague second only to the Colorado beetle. This monograph is an authoritative statement of the present position of the musk rat in Europe—its biology, distribution, control and economic importance.

Some doubt is expressed as to whether extermination is even conceivable; it is certainly impossible without virtually continental co-operation and gigantic expenditure. The value of the skin, marketed as musquash, encourages trapping and helps to bring the annual bag to over a million, but this figure is negligible when one realizes that the musk rat can start breeding at six months and have three or four litters, each averaging seven young, a year.

Four different types of damage are listed. First, and most important, is the result of their extensive tunnelling in the banks of rivers. Then follows their effect on fisheries and on fish traps and nets, and finally there is the direct damage to crops. Considerable space is devoted to their control, largely by trapping, and there is an exhaustive bibliography of forty pages. The musk rat's history in Great Britain is recorded and it is noted that the successful campaigns of 1932 and 1933 cost a total of around £12,000. The price was cheap if only we have learned our lesson.

G. S. C.

THE SEXUAL CYCLES OF VERTEBRATES. By J. F. D. FRAZER.
Hutchinson. 10s. 6d.

“The reader for whom this book is designed is the university graduate or senior student”; so its appeal to readers of *Oryx* will be limited. It provides a competent review of the mechanisms whereby male and female vertebrates are adapted for mating and the production of young. It deals with the anatomy and functions of the genital system, the breeding season, the sexual cycles of the different classes of vertebrates and the important and interesting part that the hormones play in sexual function and behaviour.

L. H. M.

SECRETS OF THE ANIMAL WORLD. By F. J. POOTMAN. Translated into English by Mervyn Savill. English edition published by Souvenir Press, Ltd., London, W. 1, 1959. 18s.

Of recent years a branch of animal study which has intrigued mankind since earliest times has been placed on a sound scientific footing. It is called Ethology, or simply, the Study of Animal Behaviour.