

## Book Reviews

**So Excellent a Fishe** by Archie Carr. The Natural History Press, New York. \$5.95.

Dr. Carr is Professor of Zoology at the University of Florida as well as a Research Associate of the American Museum of Natural History, which both prepared the (excellent) line illustrations for this (excellent) book, and sponsored its publication in a pleasant format, with many photographic illustrations in addition. Moreover, Archie Carr can write well, and the result is a fascinating book, essential to the understanding of a top priority in wildlife conservation. It is largely concerned with the author's own researches in the Caribbean, now famous through his articles in the *National Geographic Magazine*, and carried out with characteristic American competence and finance in support of Professor Carr's own intuitions and patient fieldwork. The results add greatly to our knowledge of what nevertheless remain creatures of marine mystery. Carr reports his own studies of turtle breeding, hatching, rearing, migration and much else, and he is also more than generous to others of us who have been carrying out similar, if less adequate, fieldwork in other parts of the world! But if anyone even doubted who was the world's master turtler, *So Excellent a Fishe* finally dispels such doubt: the crown goes, deservedly, to Archie Carr. But it is a pity he chose so abstruse a title (from a pioneer 1620 Bermuda Assembly Law to control turtle poaching!) for so scientific, albeit popular, a work, and it is rather less comprehensive than the subtitle: "A Natural History of Sea Turtles". It deserves a more descriptive main title when published in Europe, as it must be – and in as many languages as possible.

The final chapter, "Sea Turtles and the Future", is full of gloom tempered with the author's own constructive optimism. In fact, the world turtle situation is now deteriorating so fast that we cannot afford to wait for completed research or perfect co-ordination of policies. Only drastic *action* in all three tropical oceans will save these lovely, placid reptiles from the same fate as the great mammals of the seas in this century.

TOM HARRISON

**Future Environments of North America**, edited by F. Fraser Darling and John P. Milton. Natural History Press, \$12.50.

Faced with a volume of 792 pages, how can one poor reviewer hope to give an idea of its essence, especially when its two editors, one of them among the most eminent of living conservationists, have not essayed the task of summing up its contents? Nonetheless here is a volume from which men will be quarrying in 1984, perhaps even in 2084. The development of North America in the past 300 years is the most gigantic experiment in applied ecology that man has ever undertaken. Man did not know that he was experimenting, of course; he just laid waste the land and its rich resources. And until he had nearly finished nobody had ever heard of ecology. Here is the chart for the next, perhaps not 300 but at least 50 years.

The most hopeful thing that I distilled from all these words come from Frank Darling himself. He points out that the destruction of habitat is not necessarily a bad thing. Fresh and more complex secondary habitats, which might never have existed, can appear. The influence of man may produce by overgrazing the ghastly desert that lies not far inland from the Californian coast; or it may, as in the English chalk downland now so rapidly vanishing, produce an extremely rich habitat, full of specialised plants and insects, held in equilibrium by controlled

grazing. Man may, as with the Army Corps of Engineers, wantonly destroy the Everglades, but he may also, as I have seen for myself, create another Eden for wildfowl like the Kern Wildfowl Refuge, simply by using those same bulldozers beneficently to create a vast duck marsh in the middle of that same ghastly Californian desert.

For making this volume possible, we have to thank the Conservation Foundation, which brought together 45 ecologists, geographers, economists and allied specialists for a five-day meeting in Virginia in April, 1965. Their deliberations ranged over the vast canvas of the ecological, economic, cultural and regional aspects of the future land use of North America. Anybody who used this as a bedside book, and read one paper or summation a night for seven weeks, would emerge at the end a much more thoughtful man. I commend it to planners and ecologists – in or out of bed – on both sides of the Atlantic.

RICHARD FITTER

**The Elephant People, by Dennis Holman.** John Murray, 35s.

This brilliant account of Kenya's anti-poaching campaign of many years' duration, primarily concerned with elephants and conducted mainly in the eastern sector of the Tsavo National Park, inevitably will have only limited appeal – even for a large proportion of the immigrant local populace. The graphic description – no matter how vivid – of the thousands of square miles of featureless, waterless thorn bush and the blistering heat is meaningful only to those who have experienced the rigours of this terrible terrain. The story of the arduous campaign against the traditional elephant poachers of the region, the primitive Liangulu, who use a long bow of incredible dimensions and equipped with a deadly arrow, smeared with a vegetable poison for which there is no known antidote, is intriguing though apt to indulge in too much detail. Infuriating and humiliating is the account of the manifold frustrations in the rangers' endeavour to outwit the coastal Asian and Arab "millionaire" receivers who so skilfully bribed their way out of trouble. The Park was at last cleared of its expert and most destructive poaching fraternity, but at what cost? For now, lacking systematic wastage, it is overstocked with elephants which are disastrously destroying their own habitat.

"The most tragic part of the whole affair is that, in their dedicated efforts to save a wildlife species, the game men really succeeded in virtually destroying the Liangulu, an ethnic minority of very great interest and one on whom no anthropological work has ever been carried out."

C. R. S. PITMAN

**The Deer and the Tiger, by G. B. Schaller.** University of Chicago Press, 72s.

Hitherto most wildlife in India has been viewed by sportsmen over the sights of a rifle. Observers may have spent time in the jungles without shooting, but little in the way of critical study of animal behaviour has resulted. The literature is diffuse, anecdotal, and frequently downright misleading, based upon what the author thinks ought to happen rather than on what actually does.

Dr. Schaller has rectified this with an outstandingly competent study of several species of deer, the gaur, and the predators that affect them—tiger and leopard. He worked in the Kanha National Park, most of which is a park only in name, poached by villagers and over-grazed by domestic stock. The basic behaviour of chital, sambar, barasingha and hog deer and also blackbuck is outlined as never before, and compared and correlated with that of related species elsewhere—deer in America and Europe, and antelopes in Africa. Factors affecting population dynamics, survival and dominance are all fully discussed;