

The Cheetah: The Biology, Ecology, and Behaviour of an Endangered Species, by **Randall L. Eaton**. Van Nostrand Reinhold, £6.35.

The author has studied cheetahs for many years, both in the field and in captivity. In nine well selected chapters, he gives a survey of his results and those of other researchers; the chapters on Ecology, Social Organization and Courtship and Mating are particularly rewarding because they contain the author's original contributions. On the whole, facts are presented clearly, the gaps in existing knowledge are pointed out properly, and conclusions are drawn accordingly with due caution.

The conservation chapter reveals the usual bleak story of relentless persecution of a carnivore as a 'pest', the hunting and poaching for its spotted fur, the decrease of natural prey species and the outright habitat destruction, all the consequences of short-term land exploitation and unrestrained population growth. Useful and even necessary as captive breeding is for many other purposes, however, there is, to this reviewer's mind, very little hope in attempting it with a view to reintroducing the animal later in its former ranges: ecosystems such as the African savanna and brushland, once destroyed, will never be recreated. So let us put all our effort into trying to save of them what still can be saved in the world.

PAUL LEYHAUSEN

Field Guide to the Birds of the Galapagos, by **Michael Harris**. Illustrator Barry Kent MacKay. Collins, £3.50.

Birds of Seychelles and the Outlying Islands, by **Malcolm Penny**. Illustrator Chlöe Talbot Kelly. Collins, £3.50.

Birds of New Providence and the Bahama Islands, by **P. G. C. Brudenell-Bruce**. Illustrator Hermann Heinzl. Collins, £3.50.

Birds of the Falkland Islands, by **Robin W. Woods**. Anthony Nelson, PO Box 9, Oswestry, Shropshire, £8.50.

'If I could keep only one of my bird books it would be this' . . . A comment from a reviewer of the European Field Guide, then one of the first widely seen books of its kind in Britain, although the Peterson American Guides were already well established bird-watcher's bibles across the Atlantic. Since then the Field Guide collection has grown into a library, not only expanding upon well covered areas of reference but filling many a total vacuum. What could be said of the European bird guide then can now be said of a great many more. Their success lies I think, in their scientific completeness as check lists, their concentration on simple facts that ordinary naturalists want to know, their convenient size and the generally high standard of illustration. They have spread out in both animal and plant forms and in geographical coverage, and now they are reaching an area close to the hearts of many – the avifauna of the remote and romantic oceanic islands.

Three excellent new examples are now available. Michael Harris's work with the Charles Darwin Research Station has given us the *Birds of Galapagos*; Malcolm Penny's experience with the Aldabra expeditions and the ICBP on Cousin Island has led to *Birds of the Seychelles*; and P. G. C. Brudenell-Bruce has used a unique knowledge of the Caribbean to bridge the bird-guide gap between Bond's *Birds of the West Indies* and the original Peterson – the 'Eastern Pete'. When a pattern is reached with which readers are in accord change becomes unwanted and comparisons hard to strike. These three are all born of specialised knowledge, all clearly and competently illustrated but perhaps because of their content alone, have an added ingredient that makes one read them for enjoyment rather than reference.

Oceanic islands have short check-lists – even those close to South America. Most have their *corps élite* of endemics, the regular visitors that pass through or breed, and sometimes an even larger list of vagrants – a fascinating list that will always be found wanting if only through a shortage of observers. This was especially true of Malcolm