

are given of cheetah, lion, bears, antelopes, primates and many others, including several smaller creatures such as pangolin, ratel and giant squirrel, whose fate tends to be overlooked. The last chapter, which could well have been presented as an appendix, reviews current conservation policy and the features of some 48 existing reserves, which (excluding one inaccessible area in eastern Assam) add up to 4700 square miles. It is to be hoped that a firmly negative answer will soon be given to the author's question—"Can it really be true that in a country of 1.8 million square miles some fifty areas (averaging) no more than ten miles by ten . . . cannot be left alone . . . free of exploitation?"

HUGH ELLIOTT

Giraffes, by C.A.W. Guggisberg. Arthur Barker, 21s.

Spiders of Southern Africa, by J.H. Yates; **Snakes of Africa**, by R.M. Isemonger. Books of Africa, Rs.3.50 each.

Wild Africa's Silent Call, by Derek Townsend. Allen and Unwin, 45s.

The author of *Giraffes* is well-known for his long (20) years of extensive field experience, besides being an expert wild animal photographer. Succinct and lucid, his book is a comprehensive, carefully compiled account, historically, zoologically and ecologically, of an extraordinary creature, well illustrated in black-and-white and colour. One picture shows clearly the giraffe's long, dark blue tongue (basal third pink), an organ which leaves a rubbery coating after a bare arm is licked, and another, of five giraffes lying, or rather sitting down, is a masterpiece. The final chapter outlines the discovery, distribution, ecology and zoology of the forest-dwelling okapi.

Spiders do not arouse general enthusiasm, but this is a book of absorbing interest, well written, skilfully presented and incredibly informative. Most spiders are small; the largest, with a body length up to 50 millimetres, most fearsome looking and with an unpleasantly poisonous bite, is the repulsive, hairy, 'baboon' spider, erroneously called 'tarantula'. There are also ant mimics, a fishing spider, the bewildering camouflage of the 'bark' spider, terrestrial and arboreal 'trap-door' spiders, the brightly coloured 'hard-backs' with enamel-like carapace, and many others. Some are distributed over vast distances when the hatchlings become air-borne on gossamer threads from their spinnerets.

Snakes of Africa is the first attempt at a field guide dealing with the snakes of the whole continent. Identification is based on description, size (inches instead of millimetres), colour and behaviour; distribution is also given. Scale counts at mid-body, ventrals and subcaudals could usefully have been included. The publisher's blurb—"subject full of surprises to the reader"—must be interpreted in a way not intended, for the systematic list contains far too many errors in distribution—unfortunately now on permanent record—numerous omissions and occasional faulty classification. The colour illustrations from photographs are mainly good, though some are extremely pallid. An index of popular names is conveniently separated from the scientific index.

For those unacquainted with East Africa, Derek Townsend's book will certainly prove a fascinating story, crammed with all manner of adventure, though not a good advertisement for local communications, amenities or accommodation. Difficulties are exaggerated; zoological inexactitudes and extravagances are frequent. Illustrations good.

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