

Mammals. His was the pioneer task of creating an effective medical service for the animals in the Society's collection, including the design and equipment of a modern hospital; this he successfully accomplished in the face of considerable difficulties. On the professional side there were also novel problems, particularly in working out techniques for producing anaesthesia in species of all sizes and with widely different types of reaction; and always, of course, it was first necessary to catch his tiger – some hair-raising incidents are vividly recounted. The author writes with notable sensitivity about the animals that were his patients, emphasising the need for shielding them from emotional stress and the fundamental psychological difference between wild animals under restraint and domesticated species with an inherent orientation to man.

A. LANDSBOROUGH THOMSON

Animals of Bible Lands, by G. S. Cansdale. Paternoster Press, £2.50

Written primarily for the Bible student interested in natural history, this fascinating book attempts throughout to relate Biblical texts to modern knowledge of the Palestine fauna – 'animal' is used in its widest sense, embracing vertebrates and invertebrates alike. It seeks also to make precise identifications of the many Hebrew animal names found in Bible texts. It is hardly surprising that the translators here encountered many difficulties, but in some cases they clearly did not consult the works of those scholar-naturalists best qualified to help. Thus it is astonishing to read that the Hebrew name 'Shaphan' is still being variously translated as 'coney', or even as 'badger' or 'rock badger'. As long ago as 1866 Canon Tristram, aptly described as 'the father of natural history in Palestine', indicated that this name, meaning literally 'the hider', was correctly applied to that unique little mammal, the hyrax. Again, Tristram clearly indicated that the Hebrew name 'kippod' (qippod) meant the hedgehog; it was often, understandably, misapplied to the porcupine, but there seems little excuse for the erroneous translation 'bittern' Zeph. 2:14: 'The bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels' (of Nineveh). This was doubtless a prophetic utterance, alluding to the desolation and burial of Nineveh beneath the soil, when the humble hedgehog could indeed have lodged in its upper lintels! No doubt it did fulfil this prophecy, since *Hemiechinus* at least is known to construct a burrow.

This erudite book, well illustrated and full of interest for naturalist and bible student alike, is first class value, and stimulating reading for anyone with these interests contemplating a visit to the Holy Land.

DAVID HARRISON

The Shell Natural History of Britain, edited by Maurice Burton. Michael Joseph, £2.50.

At a time when the term 'natural history' is spoken of condescendingly, if not actually derisively by some younger biologists (and when its entry in one modern dictionary can be followed by 'archaic' – it is good to find a sponsor and publishers issuing a book with this title and an editor, and a professional scientist at that, so completely uninhibited in his use of the words in his introductory chapter. For the truth is that whereas the older, often anecdotal form of natural history has undoubtedly fallen into a well-earned decline, a newer, more precise study of living things in the wild was never more needed than at the

present time when we are trying to understand the factors that determine the survival of species and thereby, perhaps, learning how to prevent our own disappearance from the planet.

After the Editor's introductory chapter, which sets the scene geologically as well as stressing the value of amateur natural history studies, there follows a masterly and up-to-date account of the vegetation of Britain, treated historically as well as ecologically, by Dr. Francis Rose. This is the largest section of the book, which continues with excellent essays on Invertebrates by Michael Chinery; the Seashore by Sir Maurice Yonge; Fishes, both freshwater and marine, by T. B. Bagenal; Amphibia and Reptiles by Alfred Leutscher; Birds by Kenneth Williamson; and Mammals by Richard Fitter.

This is natural history at its best, embellished by a wealth of illustrations in both colour and monochrome by a team of artists: Norman Barber, John Flower, Timothy Greenwood, David Nockels, Richard Orr and John Rignall.

As Dr. Burton points out, the spread of knowledge of our flora and fauna among a wider public increases hopes of limiting the encroachment on our open spaces and of staying the woodman's axe – or its modern equivalent. This well-written and beautifully illustrated book should do much to achieve this aim.

JOHN CLEGG

They All Ran Wild by Eric C. Rolls. Angus and Robertson, £3.25

It is unusual for a farmer, in any country, to spend most of four years away from his property, roaming a continent, talking to scientists, historians, landholders, operators, pest destruction boards, and reading all he can find about animals, mainly introduced, which have become pests. When the country is Australia and the farmer is also a poet, who writes engagingly about a life-long interest, the result is an unusual and very readable book.

Inevitably, half the book is about rabbits; the early and unsuccessful attempts to introduce them, their establishment as prized sporting animals in 1859, and their subsequent spread over the country as 'the drab grey blanket' which brought ruin to so many graziers. The development of the trade in rabbit carcasses and skins is well chronicled (the author spent many days in libraries conscientiously searching the files of nineteenth-century newspapers, parliamentary papers and other records), as is the legislation against rabbits and the attempted control, by traps, fumigation, poison baits and disease, culminating in the eventual introduction of myxomatosis.

The second half deals with the less well known introductions of hares (for coursing – banned in 1953), foxes, donkeys, camels, dogs, pigs, cattle, goats and horses – all of which established themselves in the wild. Heroic efforts were made to introduce alpacas from Peru but they all died within a few years of their arrival. There are, finally, chapters on dingoes, which cannot be tolerated in sheep country, and the highly indigenous kangaroos, which sometimes compete with domestic livestock but can also be managed, and conserved, as a highly efficient protein-producing crop.

This book is not only about the imported animals; it is about the country itself – its variety and charm, droughts, floods, fires and sometimes inimical character. Also, on a muted note, it is about the author, his own life on the land, his journeying and his reflections. There is a good bibliography, an index and relevant photographs.

HARRY V. THOMPSON