

west, drier seasonal forests in the centre, and different evergreen forests in the east, with the full range of altitudinal vegetation zones throughout.

The photographs are exquisite, the text clear, concise and very informative, full of important and/or interesting facts. There are introductions to Sumatra and Kalimantan, Java and Bali, Sulawesi, the Moluccas, the Lesser Sundas and Irian Jaya, followed by a focus on each of the islands (or groups of islands), illustrating in detail the plants and animals of the national parks in each area, with good maps throughout. There are numerous nice touches, such as a *Rafflesia* bud early in the volume, one in full flower in the middle and a decaying flower at the end.

The scenic shots – of islands, volcanoes and views from mountains – are especially spectacular; the Indonesian people are featured throughout. In highlighting the treasures of Indonesia, there is a powerful conservation message, with the authors pleading for their salvation, for a more powerful international effort to support the sustainable activities of the Indonesian people, respecting their traditions and life-styles, so that their threatened ecosystems survive.

*David J. Chivers
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Biotic Diversity in Southern Africa: Concepts and Conservation edited by B. J. Huntley (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1989, ISBN 0 19 5705491, 380 pp., HB £17.50)

The issue of declining biodiversity has rapidly risen to prominence as a global issue that has captured not only the attention of the scientific community. Following the recent

Rio Earth Summit it has become an important political and economic issue as well. But what is biodiversity? Why do we need it? How much do we need? How do we look after it? These obvious questions make many natural scientists uneasy, and it is encouraging to find a book that makes a bold stab at providing some answers.

Brian Huntley has a reputation for his abilities as a coordinator, catalyst and editor, and this book is proof of those abilities. The book is based on invited review papers presented at a conference at the University of Cape Town in June 1988. The book does not read like a standard compilation of conference proceedings, however, and the papers have been refereed by an internationally respected team of conservation biologists. The papers are grouped into six parts: the first three consider the dynamic nature of biodiversity, human dependence on biodiversity, and the survey, evaluation and monitoring of biodiversity; the last three cover the conservation status of terrestrial, riverine and marine biotas, and review national policy on and corporate involvement in South Africa's natural environment.

My main criticism is that, while the title suggests coverage of southern Africa, the book is very much limited to South Africa. Furthermore, there is scant consideration of the growing international awareness that biodiversity can be best conserved if it can be shown to yield financial and material rewards through sustainable utilization. Zimbabwe can offer some innovative ideas in this department. The title should have been more specific or the book's geographical coverage extended over the entire southern African subregion.

Nevertheless, for wildlife conservationists working in South Africa or with interests in South Africa's biota, I can highly recommend this book. It contains clear explanations of key concepts relevant to the biodiversity issue, reviews the relevant methodology, and provides status reports for the major ecosystems.

*Johan du Toit
University of Zimbabwe*

CONSERVATION HISTORY

Fraser Darling in Africa: A Rhino in the Whistling Thorn edited by John Morton Boyd (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1992, ISBN 0 7486 0368 9, 307 pp., HB £25)

John Morton Boyd has edited the African diaries of Sir Frank Fraser Darling, adding a summary and some excellent colour photographs. The book will be enjoyed by all serious naturalists, particularly those who have an interest in the areas of Africa covered in his studies: Zambia, Kenya, Northern Tanzania and the Sudan.

Having been privileged to accompany Sir Frank on one of those surveys, I experienced at first hand the wealth of wisdom he had to offer. All the more pity, then, that these journals are mainly diaries of events and observations. The gems of wisdom that do appear are few and far between, although the editor has helped to highlight them explicitly.

The journals were written mainly as letters to his wife and therefore do not always bring out the efficacy of his findings. They do, however, provide an insight into his immediate reactions to the African scene as it

unfolded before him, and show his unusual ability to disentangle salient facts as he saw them and reassemble them so that he could give considered opinions and advice to those who sought them – little of which, sadly, was ever acted upon.

There is no doubt that Fraser Darling was one of the most important ecologists of the twentieth century. The editor writes: 'Fraser Darling was the pioneer of the ethos of conservation, uniting Nature and human nature in a single harmony. He had an *écologique* sense of right and wrong in the use of the countryside and an unremitting sense of outrage at man's maltreatment of Nature. his pre-occupation was with the Dignity of Life, the absolute beauty and perfectness of Nature'.

The editor, who was a colleague of Sir Frank's and knew him well, gives an all too brief but nevertheless interesting account of his life, which adds colour to an already fascinating series of journals.

David Lovatt Smith

They Dined on Eland: The Story of the Acclimatisation Societies by Christopher Lever (Quiller Press, London, 1992, ISBN 1 870948 59 9, 224 pp., HB £18.50)

Acclimatization is such a mouthful that author and publisher have adopted what appears at first sight to be a somewhat misleading title. They did, of course, dine on eland, but this was not the main objective of the acclimatizers, only their colourful beginning. But in the end was there ever much more to their activities? It does not help that acclimatization has had so many meanings, and needs to be distinguished from domesti-

cation, naturalization and adaptation to feral living. The author's definition, with which I agree, is 'grown or become habituated to a new climate', whether or not the animal or plant in question has become naturalized, i.e. has become an independent population in the wild, unaided by man.

Acclimatization was a typical activity of our vigorous and experimental Victorian ancestors. The only atypical thing about it was that it began in France, when Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (not to be confused with his father Etienne G. St-H.) founded the *Société Zoologique d'Acclimatation* in 1854. Not to be outdone, the British, led by the celebrated naturalist Frank Buckland (who could afford to be eccentric because his father was an Anglican dean), launched the Acclimatisation Society 6 years later. Its foundation pre-echoed that of the FFPS's forbear, the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire formed 33 years later. We read that 'a number of gentlemen interested in the Acclimatisation of Foreign Animals and Birds in the United Kingdom have determined to form themselves into a Society'. The gentlemen included three marquesses, two earls and two viscounts. They ate the eland at 'the now celebrated Eland dinner, when for the first time the freshly killed haunch of an African beast was placed on the table of the Aldersgate Tavern'. (*Guinness Book of Records*, are you listening?). Elands were then already flourishing in at least four noblemen's parks.

We must be grateful to Christopher Lever, our leading student of introduced animals, for bringing before us, with his usual meticulous care, the most detailed account ever of the

Acclimatisation Society, which lasted for 7 years, and spawned offspring in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and even Hawaii. What did the Society achieve? Precious little, it seems, for it was criticized for not having made one single useful addition to our fauna, and this is why it faded out so soon. Dining on eland proved to be an insufficient basis for a society. Luckily the SPWFE proved more effective and, as FFPS, is still going strong.

Richard Fitter
FFPS Vice-President

MAMMALS

Mammals of the Indomalayan Region: A Systematic Review by G. B. Corbet and J. E. Hill (Oxford University Press, Oxford, and Natural History Museum, London, 1992, ISBN 019 854693 9, 488 pp. HB £60.00)

As defined in this work, the Indomalayan Region extends from Pakistan in the west to the Philippines and Moluccas in the east, and north to central China and the Ryukyu Islands. This is the first attempt to review the mammal fauna of the whole region and includes 1041 species. It will be an invaluable reference work, providing a major advance in the understanding of the mammal fauna of a very rich region and its relationships to surrounding regions, and a foundation for the preparation of more country-oriented accounts and guides. Such guides have appeared for little of the region in the last 20 years and it has remained an area rather poorly served for compilation of faunal lists and identification aids.

ORYX VOL 27 NO 2 APRIL 1993