

# Book Reviews

**The Environmental Revolution:** a guide for the new masters of the world, by **Max Nicholson**. Hodder & Stoughton, 84s.

I always wondered what would happen to the world when the super-abundant energies of Max Nicholson were released from the daily shackles of guiding the Nature Conservancy. Now his two post-Conservancy books—so different from his six pre-Conservancy ones on birds—are beginning to show us. The secret revolutionary, fastening limpet bombs on the undersurface of respected institutions, is succeeded by the open and avowed revolutionary calling for the *bouleversement* of accepted practices and thought processes that is absolutely essential if human society is to reach the 21st century with a reasonable prospect of surviving to the middle of it.

The first half of this book is a sermon, and like so many other sermons in that it could have been expressed more succinctly, and that it is likely to be heard by many more of the converted than of the unconverted. Conservationists need to read the first half only the better to equip themselves with the message: that society at large, political, economic, religious, simply must take notice of what ecologists are saying about the effects of modern technological civilisation on the environment. When this message has been read and digested by 90 per cent more of the unconverted than of the converted it will have succeeded; it is up to us, the conservationists, to achieve this aim.

The second half is a badly needed history of the conservation movement since Teddy Roosevelt launched it at the turn of the century. (I know he was anticipated by many centuries by St Cuthbert, but the saint's countrymen can only be ashamed of not having followed his lead for so long). This part is so good and readable that it reinforces my feeling that not only historians but nobody else ought to write sermons. A good pamphlet is what we need now. Is it too much to ask Max to condense the first half of this book into 5000 words of a really fighting pamphlet that could have a circulation of millions?

RICHARD FITTER

**Darwin and the Beagle**, by **Alan Moorehead**. Hamish Hamilton, 75s  
A detailed account of the voyage of HMS *Beagle* and its impact on Charles Darwin and his writings, this book vividly describes the places visited, the hardships endured by the ship's company and the trials and tribulations of the whole expedition. The author has amassed an exceptionally fine selection of 50 colour and 138 black-and-white plates which could virtually stand as a book in their own right.

But there are minor errors, at least in the chapter on the Galapagos. Marine iguanas do not have webbed feet, as the entirely accurate plate shows, despite Darwin's statement that all four feet were partially webbed; it is a pity that the opportunity was not taken to point out that, good an observer as he was, Darwin was not infallible. The flightless cormorant and Galapagos penguin were not described to science until 1898 and 1871 respectively, neither are they mentioned in the *Voyage of the Beagle* or *Journal of Researches*; it would be interesting to know where Darwin reports having seen them and why he did not collect them if indeed he did record them. On a more general level, the modern scientific names should surely have been used in the captions to the plates, or at least it should have been stressed that the names used are out of date.

But such errors will not detract from the enjoyment of this well written and lavishly produced book—a welcome addition to the many already published on Darwin and excelling many of them in literary style and general presentation.

M. P. HARRIS

**The Vanishing Jungle, by Guy Mountfort.** Collins. 63s.

This account of the author's two fact-finding expeditions to Pakistan to investigate the plight of its once abundant wildlife is a depressing though fascinating story. The losses of wildlife and primary vegetation are greater even than had been feared, the habitat destruction adversely affecting the ungulates and thus depriving carnivores of necessary food. An East Pakistan reserve of 800 square miles was progressively reduced, for various reasons, to a mere 172; everywhere poaching, poisoning and commercialisation of animal products inflicted gigantic losses. Lack of effective control was primarily responsible for this disastrous state of affairs. But the prospect now seems good that many of the animals brought to the verge of extinction will be saved, and that Pakistan's rich heritage is on the road to survival. It is gratifying that the author's wise recommendations to the Pakistan Government, based on the findings of his first tour, were immediately accepted: the Pakistan Wildlife Committee was established and properly guarded nature reserves created. On his second tour the author was able to see how determined the Pakistan Government is to safeguard its wild life.

The wide range of habitats examined included desert, Punjab Salt Range (where the reviewer found urial plentiful in 1913), high altitude mountains (the war deprived the reviewer of a projected visit to the Gilgit Agency in 1915), mangrove swamps of the Indus delta, the wet lands and rain forest of Sylhet, and the Sunderbans (in the Bay of Bengal), still, as in 1910, the haunt of a dangerous breed of man-eating tiger.

Both colour and black-and-white illustrations from Eric Hosking's superb photographs are, as is to be expected, singularly beautiful. Three valuable appendices list respectively mammals (with their distribution), reptiles and amphibians, and birds; a fourth, by Eric Hosking, advises on photography.

C. R. S. PITMAN

**The Antarctic, by H. G. R. King.** Blandford Press, 55s.

Many years of answering questions on the polar regions have inspired the author to compile this Antarctic vademecum to which the plain man can reliably turn for the basic facts. As Librarian and Information Officer of the Scott Polar Research Institute, he is certainly well placed to write a book of this kind for he has behind him not only the support of one of the world's most comprehensive polar libraries but also the counsel of a resident team of experts. This is not primarily a biological text; it comprises the nature of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic, man's scientific activities in the region and a brief history of its exploration. Nevertheless, something like a third of the text is devoted to a description of the wildlife, and the author has properly laid stress on the fact that here is one of the few remaining areas of the Earth's surface where the native fauna and flora are still relatively free from man's interference. The ecological balance of Antarctica and its surrounding islands is an exceedingly fine one; whole animal and plant communities could easily be destroyed by human interference however unintentional. Two chapters devoted to seals and whales emphasise the almost complete extinction of the fur and elephant seals in the nineteenth century and