

REVIEWS

ADAM'S BROOD. By COLIN BERTRAM. Peter Davies, London. 1959. 21s.

This most remarkable book by a member of our Council should be carefully perused by all readers of *Oryx*. Described in its subtitle as "hopes and fears of a biologist", it is an extremely readable homily which might justifiably be taken as a primer of human ecology. Dr. Bertram sets forth in no uncertain fashion the root causes of all the undesirable features arising from man's supercession of the rest of the animal and vegetable creation and is especially emphatic on the irrationality of continued human over-population. His fears seem far to exceed his hopes. He has much to say on current social ills, including terse, sensible remarks upon human miscegenation and the so-called colour problem. The tragedy of the almost universal lack of biological knowledge among politicians is also justly stressed.

But most important from the conservationists' point of view is Chapter V, headed "Exploitation and Conservation". The author does not deal with many specific instances, and what he does have to say is largely concerned with marine biology. Nevertheless he educes important principles applicable to all natural resources. This is not to say that his views are coloured solely by his studies in marine faunas: his net is widely cast both there and elsewhere and the wide variety of his illustrative material, ranging from such phenomena as steatopygia to ichthyophagy in camels, shows the breadth of his background; whilst his descriptions of experiences such as the sighting of the whale-shark in the Red Sea reach truly poetic heights.

There are two important omissions which I think might have enhanced the author's arguments in the subject of wasteful exploitation of natural resources. These are the enormous and increasing acreage devoted to the production of two commodities in enormous demand among human populations, namely tea and tobacco, neither of which can be in any way regarded as necessities either dietetically or otherwise.

The photographic illustrations are well chosen and of excellent quality. There is a foreword from Sir Julian Huxley.

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