

Book reviews

Seals of the World 2nd edition
Judith E. King
Oxford University Press and British
Museum (Natural History), 1983,
£12.50

A generation of seal biologists has grown up using the first edition of Judith King's *Seals of the World* as their standard handbook. Now, 19 years later, we are glad to have the second edition. In fact, it is not so much a second edition as a completely new book with much new material and a more attractive format. It provides a thoroughly readable account which will be of interest to expert and layman alike.

After an informative introduction, entertainingly decorated by antique drawings of seals, the first section of the book deals with the diversity of pinnipeds. Although seals, sea-lions and walruses are no longer held to constitute the order Pinnipedia in their own right (because of the convincing demonstration of their origin from two distinct stocks of carnivores) they have sufficient features in common to be treated as a natural group. Judith King discusses this in a chapter on fossils and evolutionary relationships. But the bulk of this section is made up of a chapter in which each living species is described and an account of its natural history and distribution given. For nearly all species there is a colour photograph (many by the author), which alone would justify the book.

The second section deals with pinniped biology. Judith King is an anatomist and much of this section demonstrates her interest in the anatomy of seals. Perhaps this approach is not much favoured nowadays, but a work like this shows how well the workings of an animal can be explained by a study of its structure.

A final section of appendices includes explanations of the scientific names of seals, geographical and general indexes and an extensive bibliography of some 700 titles.

Some people will be disappointed that the more recent work on, for example, the social structure of seal breeding systems, or the energetics of seals, have not been included. I myself would have liked to see more about the relationships between man and seals. But it is captious to

complain at these omissions. Within its chosen scope this book is admirably put together. It is excellent value and should be on the bookshelf of all those who want or need to know the facts about seals.

Nigel Bonner
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The Ecology of Whales and Dolphins
D.E. Gaskin
Heinemann, 1982, £25.00

This book is one which all scientists having a broad interest in cetaceans will wish to possess. The general reader will, however, need to balance its high price against its undoubted flaws. The most serious of these is the book's unevenness. For example, the chapters on Metabolic rate and energy budget, on Evolution and on Zoo-geography are detailed and highly technical, so much so, indeed, that many of the diagrams are virtually incomprehensible to the reader that does not already know the subject, and the text is correspondingly opaque.

On the other hand the chapter on Social structure and social behaviour is simple and readable. Within this chapter the discussion of communication and intelligence is superficial and consciously biased. The author has decided to debunk the common assumptions about the high mental abilities of some cetaceans, but in doing so has really not done justice to this important subject. Thus evidence from studies of brain size, structure and function is completely ignored. The discussion of Management is adequate and thought-provoking. It is the author's misfortune that soon after his literature search cut-off date (January 1980) important innovations in the management of whaling took place. Even events in 1979 are not mentioned, so there is no reference to the intense debates about the participation of non-whaling Third World countries in the IWC, the creation of the Indian Ocean Sanctuary, partial moratoria as management tools, the attempts to revise the New Management Procedure adopted in 1974, and the very controversial question of the management of so-called aboriginal/subsistence whaling as distinct from industrial commercial whaling. In this chapter the account of

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