

Book reviews

Gorilla: Struggle for survival in the Virungas

George B. Schaller

Aperture, New York, 1989, 113 pp.,
HB \$39.95

Some months ago we were exposed to the worst book on matters relating to gorillas ever published—the wholly dreadful *Woman in the Mists* by Farley Mowat. We now have one of the best—*Gorilla* by Michael Nicholls and George B. Schaller. The emphasis is firmly back where it belongs, on the gorillas and their conservation.

Schaller's long introductory essay sets the scene perfectly; a calm, comprehensive presentation with up-to-date information and, for a welcome change, full recognition given to the many key players in the development of mountain gorilla conservation. At last the 1970s time-warp that characterizes so many books on the subject has been broken out of. Michael Nicholl's photographs are superb and accompany what I rate the most striking feature of all—the collection of quotes from the field workers themselves, expatriate and Rwandan. The resulting collage of statements rings true; here is, finally, an accurate portrayal of mountain gorilla conservation as it is today.

The book is so good I really had to dredge to find criticisms. The status of the eastern lowland gorilla gives no grounds, I believe, for the complacency that I might have detected in Schaller's introduction. For reasons of organizational loyalty, I would also have liked to have seen more mention of FFPS's continuing role in channelling support into the work. I recognize, however, that this would have required comparable mention of the many other bodies that have played important parts in gorilla conservation and the African Wildlife Foundation is, after all, the key field management organization. These comments constitute minor carpings.

Here, then, is a book I recommend
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without hesitation to anyone who really wants to know what mountain gorilla conservation is all about.

Roger Wilson, FFPS Consultant to the Mountain Gorilla Project

Tiger Moon

Fiona and Mel Sunquist

University of Chicago Press, 1988,
183 pp., HB £19.95

Twenty years ago the tiger was heading for extinction while its life in the wild was largely a mystery. But in the early 1970s the World Wildlife Fund launched Operation Tiger to stop the rot. Financial aid was given to the Smithsonian Institution of Washington DC for a long-term study of the ecology of the tiger in the Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal.

Mel Sunquist spent two years with a team of American and Nepalese scientists. He and his biologist wife, Fiona, have written a vivid account of adventures catching tigers, radio-collaring and tracking them. They evoke the joys and trials of jungle life—burning heat and bitter cold according to the season; riding elephants, each with a distinct personality, through towering grasses safe from irritated rhinos; the dominating routine of data collection. They also portray the problems of local people living close to tigers and wild animals that raid their crops.

A terrifying experience occurred when an angry tigress dragged colleague Kirti Man Tamang from a tree. Sunquist's elephant bolted and fell, pitching him to the ground, stunned. Eventually, an elephant was persuaded to approach badly mauled Kirti, who was recovered. The tigress did not attack him on the ground. On another occasion Fiona sat paralysed in her photo-hide while a known bad-tempered rhino ate the side. He wandered away without apparently detecting her.

Tiger Moon neatly summarizes what was learnt of the life of Chitwan's tigers. Twenty-five tigers, as well as leopards and some other species, were radio-collared, enabling Sunquist and his colleagues to follow movements and associations, locate kills, and find cubs, which they tracked when they left their mothers.

The tiger ecology project resulted in the extension of the Chitwan Park, and provided valuable data relevant to wildlife management elsewhere. From the Sunquists' book we know that all involved had a lot of fun too.

Peter Jackson, Chairman, IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, 1172 Bougy, Switzerland

The Trout and Salmon Handbook—a Guide to the Wild Fish

Robin Ade

Christopher Helm, London, 122 pp.,
HB £12.95

From two statements on the first pages to the effect that: (i) the Pleistocene began 100 million years ago (p. 2) and (ii) the salmoniforms (*sic*) are the oldest order of bony fishes (p. 1), it could only be hoped that this book would get better. A false hope, although some slight compensation is that the book did not get worse.

According to the jacket flap, this book is the 'definitive guide to all the Salmon, Trout and Char'. It is not. However, I am unclear what this book is. It does not cater for the natural historian, nor the conservationist, nor the fisheries biologist, nor the angler, nor the artist. A reader in any of these categories would be better served elsewhere.

The taxonomy is poor and no reason is given for the exclusion of genera and the inclusion of certain species. The book purports to offer a simple account of the natural history of the species,

Oryx Vol 23 No 3, July 1989

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which to a limited extent it does, along with missed opportunities, inaccuracies and contradictions. For example, considering parr (a conspicuously marked juvenile stage of *Salmo* species) we are not informed about the likely and interesting biological significance of the sexually precocious male parr. Comment on the statement that dense populations retain the juvenile parr would have been beneficial. Not constructive are descriptions of parr markings as 'territorial' on one page and 'being typical of species that live in fast water' on another.

Conservation is mentioned but with the strong implication that these species should be conserved for the sport angler. This attitude appears in such phrases as 'unspoilt fly-only salmon rivers' and population densities are described as 'rod-hour effort'. It is possible for the altruistic conservationist and the angler to work together but only if the survival of the fishes and their environment is the genuine common aim.

The colour illustrations are adequate, although the scales are represented by intersecting diagonal straight lines. Each page has a small line sketch at the side, the purpose of which eludes me. Why, for example, should a small sketch of the nase (a cyprinid fish—*Chondrostoma nasus*) appear, without explanation, on p. 105?

Potentially interesting points are not capitalized on. Mention is made of giant trout in the Caspian Sea; I can find no reference to these in Berg's monumental work on the fishes of the USSR and would have appreciated details.

Finally, although I had already decided not to recommend this book, my resolution was firm by p. 116 where I read 'All species can be kept in aquaria' and among other horrors 'char are easily tamed'. I still do not know why this book was

written and I still cannot think of anyone who would benefit from reading it.

Dr Keith Banister, Banstead, Surrey

The Fishes of Arkansas

Henry W. Robinson and Thomas M. Buchanan

University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 72701 USA, 536 pp., HB £40.00, SB £24.00

This is an excellent book. Many years ago (especially during the 1950s) American states started publishing works on their own ichthyofauna. A formative star was Trautmann's *Fishes of Ohio* (1957). This work follows that scholarly and useful format.

The book starts with a general geographical review of Arkansas and a history of ichthyology in that state. No punches are pulled, accidental chemical spills are mapped as are the sites of the nation's most hazardous wastes. Significantly, perhaps, these sections are followed by a list of the threatened, locally extirpated and extinct species in the state.

The bulk of the book is a detailed account of all the species of the state. Initially, the families are keyed out and each family has a key to the species contained therein. For each species an account is provided with a description, distinguishing features, habitat and biology data, usually a coloured picture and a map of pre- and post-1960 distribution.

If there is a criticism, it is that some of the distribution maps are too small. I have not yet found the solid triangle representing pre-1960 distribution on the distribution map of *Noturus flavus* (p. 305). That is my only complaint.

To finish, is an appendix containing hints on identification, a species list and a glossary. The bibliography is extensive. All in all, this is

a splendid book and a superb example of how state-wide faunal studies should be conducted.

Dr Keith Banister, Banstead, Surrey

The Shamba Raiders: Memories of a Game Warden

Bruce Kinloch

Ashford Press Publishing, 1988, 405 pp., £15.95

The Shamba Raiders, Bruce Kinloch's memoirs of his work as a game warden in Uganda and Tanganyika (Tanzania), was first published in 1972.

The triviality of a charging buffalo, not of course trivial for the person charged, is dealt with in the same fine detail as the description of the really important decisions that were taken during the period of Bruce Kinloch's sojourn with the Game Department. The background to the realization of the need for National Parks in Uganda and the development of Murchison Falls and Queen Elizabeth National Parks are carefully described. Their early development, with an eye to the tourist and therefore their economic contribution to a developing nation, not only established these two parks, but paved the way for the Kidepo Valley National Park and Lake Mburu National Park, which were to come much later.

The presumption that 'nature would take care of herself' was identified as unsound in Uganda. Research in Uganda Parks by Fulbright Scholars from the USA recognized the need to manage if the diversity of the wildlife was to be maintained, in areas, which although large, were fast becoming islands in a sea of human development. The formation of the Nuffield Unit of Tropical Animal Ecology to be succeeded at independence by the Uganda Institute of Ecology, which still exists today, is described. The trustees of the