

Published on behalf of IUCN and the Conservation Foundation, it is to be hoped that they will follow the pointers set out by this book and sponsor further such ventures until every developer is apprised of the need for ecological awareness and every conservationist of economic constraints.

ALASTAIR FITTER

The Arena of Life: the Dynamics of Ecology, by **Lorus and Margery Milne**. Allen & Unwin, £5.25.

So many books with similar titles to this one have turned out to be vague and imprecise accounts of some aspect of animal life or human destiny, that one approaches another with some misgivings. However, it soon becomes clear that this one is emphatically not in this category. Fifty years ago, when titles indicated with stark reality what a book was all about, it might have been called 'The Plain Man's Guide to Ecology', and it will be hard to better it in this role.

The book is, of course, of American origin and was planned, prepared and produced by Chanticleer Press, New York, who are to be congratulated on such a splendidly produced work. The authors, a man and wife team of biologists who have twenty-eight books already to their credit, deserve no less praise for their part. Skillfully compressing the essentials of a dozen disciplines, ranging from climatology to biogeography, they give first a concise, up-to-date but understandable account of the principles of ecology. The theory is applied to practical examples from today's environmental problems, especially in making clear that the time factors in natural cycles no longer permit us to dump more wastes into the environment than they can accommodate. Important chapters on the population explosion and on ecological awareness bring the chapters into focus for all of us.

To readers of this journal the second half of the book, dealing with the ecological communities of the seas, fresh waters, soil, forests, grasslands, deserts and polar regions, will probably be the most interesting. Drawing on their wide experience of six continents, the authors give fascinating and up-to-date information on the problems facing each ecosystem in the circumstances of the modern world.

The illustrations are outstanding, well selected for the topics they enlighten and excellently reproduced. At the end of the book is a summary of modern zoological classification, a good glossary and a comprehensive bibliography. It is a book that one would like to see in every school library as well as on the table of everyone who feels that what is happening in the natural world is of no concern to him or her.

JOHN CLEGG

Conservation, edited by **A. B. Costin** and **H. J. Frith**. Penguin, A\$2.20.

Two hundred years after Cook's discovery, Australia still fascinates the observer and especially the biologist. But Australia is not an outdoor museum, it has a thrusting, exuberant, dynamic economy, hell-bent to exploit all available resources. Fortunately, throughout the world, there is an increasing realisation of the fragility of our environment, despite its resilience, and the need to stabilise the population, re-cycle materials and ensure that all economies have an ecologically sound basis. As the editors plead, the environment should not be a by-product of our business activities, but these should be consciously adjusted to provide the type of living conditions we desire. It is reassuring that most States and the Commonwealth have taken, or are considering, action against pollution, but a co-ordinated approach to resource use is badly needed. Under Australian

conditions good, flexible land use and the conservation of soil and water are vital, as has long been realised by the Water Resources Council, but greater re-use of waste water and more provision for wildlife is required.

In recent years it has been appreciated that Australia has unique opportunities for wildlife conservation, for national parks and nature reserves that need to be managed to maintain their characteristic value. Such management would not preclude some commercialisation of wildlife, provided this was on a sound ecological basis of humane and hygienic cropping. At a time when mineral exports are increasing and rural exports decreasing in Australia, this book advocates a policy of concentrating on rural production in developed areas and keeping undeveloped land in a near-natural condition of extensive land-use, leaving some freedom of choice to future generations. Outside the Federal Territories and offshore waters, the States have constitutional powers over most resources in Australia—soil, water, forests, flora, fauna, freshwater fisheries and minerals—but conservation is a personal, a national and an international concern, and the greatest co-operation between individual, State and Commonwealth is necessary if this unique environment is to be maintained.

HARRY V. THOMPSON

The Life of the Far North, by William A. Fuller and John C. Holmes. McGraw-Hill, £2.50.

Polar Worlds, by Richard Perry. David & Charles, £3.95.

The first of these books about the life of polar regions is restricted to the north; the other deals with both ends of the earth's axis. The authors of the first are professional ecologists who have travelled extensively in the far north, and engaged in research at a number of biological stations in both arctic and sub-arctic regions. In lively, non-technical language they guide the reader through the spruce forests of the northern taiga and the wide treeless spaces of the tundra, and give a tremendous amount of interesting information.

Mainly designed for North American readership, the book is divided into three sections; the Northern World; Land of Ice and Snow; and Land of the Long Day. An appendix includes brief descriptions of the national parks, notes on the particular physical and biological features of US and Canadian national parks, an account of permafrost and man's effects upon it, short descriptions of four threatened animal species, and a glossary.

The manuscript was reviewed by a top readability consultant to make certain that it would be easily understood by younger readers. Understandable it certainly is; but most people, especially those who will never have the opportunity to visit arctic regions, will be increasingly irritated to be told 'you will find that . . .'; 'the landscape you will see as you fly . . .'; 'you might imagine that you were in an insect paradise'. I found myself waiting for the next 'you', and subconsciously counting them. In all other respects it is a splendid book, with more than 100 colour photographs.

By contrast, there are no colour photographs in Richard Perry's *Polar Worlds* and only four indifferently reproduced black and white ones. Even one of these is misleadingly captioned, for it actually shows the fan-shaped snout of Commonwealth Glacier, and not McMurdo Sound itself. There are 20 drawings of mammals and birds, and four maps. It is curious that, according to the list of illustrations, the detail maps of the north and south polar regions are two small ones showing the 50°F isotherm and the limits of the Antarctic Convergence respectively, whereas in fact the larger maps of each region carry far more detail.

The first part of the book deals with the Antarctic and its life, the second