

Book reviews

management problems other than the control of hunting is more satisfactory. Dr Gaskin's account of methods for the analysis of cetacean populations is a useful elementary introduction to the methods used to estimate the numbers of whales and dolphins and their rates of reproduction and mortality. Even here, however, there are some important gaps. The greatest attention in the past decade has been given to the methods of counting by planned sightings surveys, but slight attention is given to such work in this book.

The above listing of many of the chapters will indicate that the word 'ecology' in the title is interpreted extremely broadly by the author. Other chapters are on distribution, on diet and feeding behaviour, and on Conceptual views of species and speciation, and recognition of degrees of polytypy. A chapter on Environmental contaminants and trace elements: their occurrence and possible significance, appears to have been added to the end of the book as an afterthought; it is well-documented. The author's conclusion is that we do not know if cetaceans are adversely affected by what we call pollutants, but that if they are there is nothing we can do about it. He agrees with K. Mellanby that 'we have to learn to live with pesticides', with the implication that the whales and dolphins will have to learn to live with them too, as well as with many other human-caused changes in the marine environment, or perish.

I regret not being able to recommend this book more whole-heartedly. The highly technical chapters that I have mentioned appear to be authoritative, and appear to reflect the author's personal involvement in those particular areas of research; it is a pity he does not succeed in conveying his expertise to the non-specialist reader in comprehensible language. Clear diagrams would have been helpful in many places. Elsewhere important omissions prevent the book from being a good guide to all aspects of modern research on the ecology of cetaceans. There is virtually nothing about the analysis of the 'songs' of humpback and other baleen whales, which is in my view of immense scientific interest as well as of cultural significance. The methods of visual identification of individual animals are described, but little is said about the ecological results of applying them. The book is said to have grown from a 1976

review paper by the author, on the evolution and zoogeography of the cetacea. It shows all the signs of having grown in a rather haphazard way.

Sidney Holt
*International League for
The Protection of Cetaceans*

Lords of the Arctic

Richard C. Davids. Photography by Dan Guravich

Macmillan (New York) and Sidgwick and Jackson (London), 1983, £12.95

'The polar bear to most people symbolizes the Arctic, and, though they may never expect to see one in the wild, they want to know that polar bears are there and are being properly conserved.' So writes Ian Stirling, an eminent polar bear biologist, in the foreword to this book. The same sentiment applies to the lion, tiger, elephant, and wolf. Yet, when you are in truly wild country where large mammals are still Lords, and there is no escaping them, you may find yourself feeling relieved that they are not so common as they once were!

The polar bear has been a success story for conservation. At one time its situation was alarming. Numbers were dropping everywhere through overhunting. Then, in 1973, the five nations with polar bears in their territories signed an agreement on conservation. Since then, the downward trend has been reversed and *Lords of the Arctic* tells us that polar bears are still living a truly natural life in the wilderness, not confined to a few reserves and refuges like so many of our largest and most spectacular fauna. The threat now is not so much to the species as to its environment. Without proper checks, the future exploitation of the Arctic for oil and minerals could destroy the fragile structure of its ecosystem, and we would no longer have the pleasure of knowing that polar bears were there.

Having stayed in polar bear country and had the excitement of watching them, it has been a pleasure to read this account by two men who have spent five years following and photographing them. Richard Davids' text is a mixture of personal adventures and reporting of the latest researches by the handful of zoologists who are

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piecing together a fascinating story of an animal's adaptation to a harsh environment. The treatment is journalistic ('Medical researchers are amazed at the hibernation of bears'), and the account is often rushed and sometimes a little awry, but there is a mass of information presented in a graphic and readable form. A long list of titles for further reading is very useful for anyone who wishes to delve deeper into polar bear biology. The most enjoyable parts are the accounts of the investigators' own encounters with these marvellous beasts. They are well told and avoid both sensation and whimsy.

The high point of the book, however, is the illustrations. It is not easy to select 80-odd colour pictures of one mammal species, and a white animal against a white background more often than not, without becoming very boring. Dan Guravich has managed this feat. All the pictures have something to say and there are many excellent shots showing aspects of behaviour, including several sequences of social interactions.

Robert Burton
Naturalist and author

National Parks of Western Europe

Angus Waycott

Inklon Publications, Southampton,
1983, £4.95 (HB) or £2.95 (PB).*

The first national parks in Western Europe were set up in Sweden in 1909, 37 years after Yellowstone National Park. But a lot has happened since. There are now 84 national parks in 15 countries of Western Europe, or 74 if those in England and Wales are excluded on the grounds that they are not national parks *sensu stricto* but protected landscapes.

Mr Waycott has been generous in including the national parks of England and Wales in his book. Had he not done so, there would of course be no entry at all under the United Kingdom, because there are no national parks in either Northern Ireland or Scotland—a curious anomaly, you might think, when there are now three parks in the Republic of Ireland and no fewer than 31 in Scandinavia.

Mr Waycott devotes a succinct page to each park.

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The avocet is one of the many bird species that can be seen in the wetland of Tablas de Daimiel National Park in Spain.

The pages are small, there are no detailed maps and no photographs, but no matter: the purpose is not to provide a definitive account of the parks but to introduce them to the reader. If you plan a summer holiday in Norway or Yugoslavia, you can use this useful book to identify where the national parks are, what they contain, what you can do there, where you can stay, how you can get to them and to whom you should write for further details.

The first 50 pages, though, are a thoughtful essay



The Spanish lynx, one of the mammals that live in the cork oak forests of Coto Donana National Park in Spain.

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