

## Book Reviews

**The Wild Life of India**, by E. P. Gee. Collins, 30s.

This lively account of the existing wild life resources of India, its sanctuaries and the animals in them, as well as of those dedicated individuals who have done most to promote conservation should be read by all who have at heart the welfare of the wild creatures of this earth. But above all it is a timely reminder of how in a few decades a country's once abundant fauna can be reduced well nigh to vanishing point—for instance an estimated 40,000 tigers some fifty years ago now reckoned to be barely 4,000! Well-intentioned regulations should provide an adequate safeguard, but mere lip service is valueless, and only drastic action can check the disastrous slaughter. Degradation of the habitat, too, can effect as much damage as direct killing. The late Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in the 'Foreword,' "But in practice we ignore the animal world."

The author, long resident in India and a member of the Survival Service Commission of IUCN, is also on the Executive Committee of the Indian Board for Wild Life, as well as a member of several State Wild Life Boards. An enthusiastic conservationist of profound experience of many countries, he has visited every part of India where there are rare species—and regrettably the majority are now in this category—or species of special interest. Graphically he stresses the urgency for effective protection and poses the question—what will be left in the year 2000; may it not be only memories? Fifteen of the twenty chapters are devoted primarily to individual species; a small map on an early page enables easy reference to the many localities mentioned. The discovery of the beautiful golden langur in considerable numbers and some botanical specialities are recorded. The illustrations, mainly from the author's own photographs, are remarkable; the colour pictures, exquisite. Let us hope that this vivid portrayal of the sad plight of India's splendid fauna will achieve its object—to ensure the survival of what is left before it is too late.

C. R. S. PITMAN

**Journey to the Jade Sea**, by John Hillaby. Constable, 30s.

Years ago I remember John Hillaby at press conferences about conservation, invariably needling the platform with awkward and loaded questions. As I was sometimes on the platform myself I used to think, "Blast the man. Instead of criticising our valiant efforts, why doesn't he get out himself and do something?" Well, now he has. And how!

Sadly, there are now quite a number of people in this country who have been to Lake Rudolf. The more people go there, the less one is able to assume one's intrepid Stanley-type air in conversation at home. Mercifully only a handful have still ever been to Central Island, though I have to concede that there was little that was hazardous about my own landing. Nor is there anything momentous about the journey of any traveller up to the far north of the Rift Valley today, by light aircraft or by landrover. All that is momentous is what you see when you get there, a grotesque tortured world that you can hardly call a landscape—it's a fault in the Creator's effort, a slice that went wrong and will never get right. The discoverer of Lake Rudolf described the region only seventy odd years ago as "still glowing hot and looking as though it had recently been flung up from some huge forge."

It was into all this that John Hillaby stepped, with twelve pairs of plimsols and some derelict camels, to disappear for months on an aimless march.

There was no objective, and he wandered round the awful desert in a huge circle, re-crossed his tracks south of the lake and wandered off again to complete a figure of eight. It sounds a fantastic thing to do, but nobody could read his excellent account of this epic without understanding what he did achieve, the prize which he has won for himself alone.

Had he been a game warden or a D.C., there would have been nothing to it, because years of experience would have rendered the journey a matter of routine, with landrovers and a squad of askaris. But John Hillaby apparently knew nothing about anything, and, unlike most travel writers, does not pretend that he did. He had never met a camel before, he could speak no African language, he had a gun which he had never even fired, and he did not really know where he was going. He had no communications, no base to fall back on, no means of calling for aid. If he were still wandering about today, I am not clear if anyone would know that he had not yet reappeared. It may sound mad, but it certainly proclaims the spirit of adventure *par excellence*.

His prize is that he alone knows what the early explorers in Africa really felt. And he may have known and felt even more than they did, for they were always wonderfully organised, bristling with weapons, and expert shots. Hillaby's description of his first efforts at shooting birds and game are classics of sporting humour. Likewise his painful progress at conversation with his camel boys and with the scattered tribes which he met. But it would be foolish to single out items from the narrative, because every line of this book is totally absorbing, and those like myself who are "comfortable" travellers, with journeys tightly jammed into an office life, are reduced simply to envy and a keen sense of all that one has missed. Nobody who professes an interest in Africa, wildlife or travel can fail to enjoy this splendid story.

AUBREY BUXTON

**The Enormous Zoo, by Colin Willock.** Longmans, 30s.

Having been bitten by the bug of Africa, for which there is no cure, Colin Willock has produced a most readable book about the Uganda National Parks. After a gracious tribute to Ralph Dreschfield, the first Chairman of Trustees, and the late Ken Beaton, the first Director, he etches in a background of steady development, with glimpses of the difficulties encountered, and generally overcome, in bringing the founders' plans and hopes to the reality of the firmly based organisations of the three parks which flourish today. Here too are some of the answers to the visitor's stock question: "What does a park warden do?"

Anyone connected with national parks knows the many excuses and subterfuges used to gain special facilities for filming there on a no cost basis and without benefit to the park concerned. Here is the other side of the story, showing how, by a substantial contribution to the cost, Anglia Television made it possible to go ahead with the task of moving the threatened white rhino outside the parks into the sanctuary of the Murchison Falls park. A further excellent example of theory translated into practice is the case of preservation by control, described here from the first reconnaissance of the Fulbright scholars to the eventual establishment of the Nuffield Unit of Tropical Animal Ecology: the first practical and scientific confrontation of this problem in Africa.

Some excellent photographs, together with a dust cover that itself is worth preserving, make this book a well produced and worthwhile acquisition for anyone interested in African wildlife and national parks.

C. D. TRIMMER