

The Whale, edited by **Leonard Harrison Matthews**. Allen and Unwin, 115s.

Dr Harrison Matthews and his international team of collaborators provide an excellent concise account of whales and whaling, past and present. There are chapters on whales in mythology and folklore, on the different kinds of whales, their biology, and the behaviour of dolphins and porpoises in captivity with the story of the discovery of their sonar systems. The history of whaling is given in some detail, together with a description of the modern industry and the products of whaling. An account of the development and current state of scientific research on the large whales in relation to the regulation of whaling and the International Whaling Commission is of special interest in giving an outline of the steps by which the Commission made its slow progress towards the present policy of rational management of the whale stocks, and also in indicating what remains to be done; it is to be hoped that this policy will be fully implemented and upheld in the future. Some estimates for recent population sizes of blue, fin and gray whales are given in chapter 3. A final chapter mentions some of the treasures to be found in the literature of whales and whaling, and there is a select list of some two hundred references and a short glossary of technical terms.

The book is lavishly illustrated in both colour and black and white, with fine photographs and reproductions of old prints, paintings and drawings of whaling scenes. The illustrations of the whales, however, are poor; most of them give little idea of the beauty of form and colour of the species they are supposed to portray. In addition the captions to the pygmy right and pygmy sperm whales, and to Dall's porpoise and Commerson's dolphin have been transposed.

S. G. BROWN

In the Wake of the Sea Serpents, by **Bernard Heuvelmans**. Hart-Davis, 84s.

The coelacanth rather knocked the stuffing out of those who, echoing Cuvier, stoutly maintained that there could be no more unknown large animals to discover within the bounds of planet Earth. But there is none so skilled in procrastination and delay as the scientist who does not wish to believe an unpalatable fact, and the latter-day Cuviers have many lines of defence when they wish to ignore animals which have only been sighted (with a handful of notable exceptions) by non-scientists, have scarcely even been photographed, and of which not one bone, tooth or square centimetre of skin has ever been examined by a zoologist. Science is built on disbelief; if it were not we should doubtless still have the mermaid, the mandrake and the phoenix in our natural history books. But scepticism can be carried too far, and it would need a hardened sceptic indeed not to be convinced by Dr Heuvelmans's massive research that there are *some* undescribed animals in the sea subsumed under the general name of sea serpent. Not everybody, of course, will go all the way with him in his claim that the 358 sightings of unknown animals or other phenomena, which he considers genuine, reveal the presence of no fewer than nine unknown marine beasts. The more frequently sighted of these he calls the long-necked (48 sightings), the merhorse (37), the many-humped (33), the many-finned (20), the super-otter (13) and the super-eel (12). The