

species that turns seaweed into meat and then obligingly crawls ashore to be slaughtered? Here, above all, seems a case for rational conservation and utilization, the Costa Rica conservation project is not isolated but it is all too rare.

Having said, without reservation, that this is an excellent and most useful book the reviewer feels reluctant to make any adverse criticism. But it does seem that price (nearly three pounds) may put it out of reach of many zoologists who have to buy their own books, and the size (quarto) will make it an awkward shape on many bookshelves. As only two thirds of each page are occupied by the subject matter, the lavish production and price might well have been reduced to give the book a wider circulation.

J. I. M.

FRESHWATER FISHES OF THE WORLD. By GUNTHER STERBA. Translated and revised by Dr. Denys Tucker. London, Vista Books, 1962. 70s.

In the fresh waters of Britain we are accustomed only to top fish such as trout and salmon and a group of coarse fish mostly belonging to the carp family. In other parts of the world, and particularly in the tropics, the range is vastly bigger and this is covered in Professor Sterba's large and copiously illustrated book on the world's freshwater fishes. The treatment is systematic, that is each natural family is considered in turn, with a straightforward description of each species dealt with, as well as notes on its distribution in nature and in particular the methods of keeping it in an aquarium. Here at a glance those interested in fish can learn of the breeding habits of the lesser-known species as well as the more ordinary mollies, guppies and swordtails.

Of particular importance at the moment are the cichlids, in some of which the fertilized eggs are brooded in the mouth of one of the parents until they hatch. Even then the tiny fry may still seek shelter in the parental mouth when threatened. One of these fishes, *Tilapia mossambica*, is not only interesting biologically, but is also of considerable economic importance, being farmed in fish-ponds in many parts of the world, particularly in S.E. Asia, where it helps to increase the local production of good animal protein.

This book gives much information on this essential part of the world's aquatic fauna.

G. V.

TASMANIAN WILD LIFE. By MICHAEL SHARLAND. Melbourne University Press. 86 p., 14 plates. 25s. (Aus).

This is a rather slight account of Tasmanian mammals, with a chapter on snakes. It cannot be taken seriously as a "field-study book" or as invaluable to bushwalkers and naturalists, as the dust-jacket claims. It is, as its author states, a popular account, and it consists of a series of short essays which combine brief but useful descriptions, animal anecdotes, and statements strongly coloured by personal likes and dislikes.

Reliance upon the few available literary sources is clearly acknowledged and has led to the restatement of much reliable information. But non-literary sources have occasionally let the author down. Tasmanian deer are said to be a special kind derived from the cross-breeding of Fallow deer with deer from India and Africa! Mont Turner's claim to have found the desert hopping-mouse in Tasmania, which has not been verified, is hardly a sufficient ground for listing the animal as native to Tasmania.

The section on snakes is valuable, and illustrated by clear line-drawings. These are lacking in the mammal chapters, where they would have been more useful than many of the photographs. The book is much too expensive at its Australian price.

W. P. C.

MARSUPIALS OF AUSTRALIA. By BASIL MARLOW. Jacaranda Press, Brisbane. 13s. 6d. (Aus.).

This is a well thought-out and valuable pocket guide to the Australian marsupials. So much information is packed into the terse text and numerous line-drawings and maps, that anyone will be able to criticize points of detail. In general, the information is accurate and where it is not, this is because the facts simply are not known.

A second edition could be improved by giving more advice on how to identify Australian rodents, for the amateur naturalist would have difficulty in deciding whether or not he was dealing with a small marsupial. Also, drawing an unbroken line around a suspected distribution is apt to give the impression that the range is exactly known, and deleting this would convey a better idea of just how hazy our knowledge of the range of many species is. This is a book to be carried in the pocket, and the binding should be stronger in order to withstand the rigours of the bush.

Quite apart from its usefulness within Australia, this book is highly recommended to all who would like to have the main facts about marsupials ready to hand.

W. P. C.

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST. By T. MURRAY SMITH. Jarrolds, London. 25s.

Anyone who has spent—as the author has—forty years among the wild creatures of Africa will have many a strange tale to tell, and these first-hand observations of a diversity of aspects of animal behaviour make most interesting and enjoyable reading. Murray Smith would like, as Wordsworth once wrote, to regard his wild animal acquaintances as “unoffending creatures whom he loves”, but in the light of long and sometimes painful experience rather does he infer that there are those which are “brute beasts that have no understanding”. He admits the necessity for the organized control of certain destructive and dangerous species in the interests of the indigenous population, albeit he is reluctant to engage in any type of operation entailing large-scale systematic slaughter, which he finds particularly repugnant even when in the best interests of humanity. It is not everyone who will agree with him, despite its evil reputation, that the buffalo is “wantonly vicious” and a “natural assassin”, for what are popularly and graphically styled “unprovoked” attacks are almost certainly the aftermath of previous provocation. There are delightful anecdotes of the Kenya administrative officer who regularly rode a giraffe and ostrich when on tour, and who kept as another pet a female chimpanzee of more than ordinary intelligence. His testimony to his devoted staff—especially Manda of the Wa’ Kamba—is what one would expect from anyone who knew the African as he did; moreover the wonderful loyalty of this particular henchman typifies a trait so characteristic of the unspoilt African and which commands our admiration and respect.

Murray Smith has witnessed many changes—often not for the better—in