

BOOK REVIEWS

FOSSIL HOMINIDS CATALOGUED

Catalogue of Fossil Hominids

Part I: Africa. Edited by K. P. Oakley and B. G. Campbell. (Trustees of the British Museum (Natural History), London, 1967.)

THIS book is the first part of a comprehensive three volume work which is intended to include fossil hominids recovered from all parts of the world. Subsequent volumes will be devoted to Europe and to America, Asia and Australia respectively.

The catalogue supersedes the *Catalogue des Hommes Fossiles* published in 1953 under the joint editorship of Professors H. V. Vallois and H. L. Movius. Clearly, a revision of the earlier catalogue was overdue, since new discoveries, advances in dating methods, faunal analysis, anatomical assessment and cultural classification have made the former work obsolescent.

The contents are arranged geographically following the style of the earlier book, but the information relating to each fossil site is presented under eighteen numbered headings. These headings are fully defined in the introduction and are repeated, in abbreviated form, on a handy bookmark provided for ease of reference.

The information concerning each site and find ranges from its location, geology, stratigraphy, archaeology, palaeontology and dating, through a list of the bones and references to the literature, to the addresses of repositories of both the fossils and of moulds for casts.

The editors are to be congratulated on their revision of the catalogue which has obviously been prepared with great care and attention to accuracy of detail. In this sense the catalogue stands as a definitive list and should be owned by every worker with a serious interest in the field of human evolution.

Having emphasized its value, perhaps it is not unfair to draw attention to two deficiencies; one concerns the location of the sites and the other the index. It is suggested that location has been included in such a way that a visitor could find the site from the information given in the catalogue; in local terms this may be true. However, the map of Africa which is included makes no attempt to indicate political boundaries or natural features, neither does it include any indication of scale, latitude or longitude. I feel that the reader would have been considerably helped by the inclusion of a sketch map of each country listed, with indications of the find sites in relation to the capital city, principal railways, roads, rivers and mountains.

My second criticism concerns the inadequacy of the index. The catalogue contains a mass of factual information, yet the only means of reference to this information is in geographical terms through the list of sites. A comprehensive index would permit simpler access to the contents and would increase its value enormously to researchers in a wide range of fields.

Despite these criticisms, the editors deserve our thanks and admiration for undertaking this onerous task.

M. H. DAY

WHAT HOPE FOR THE BEASTS?

Extinct and Vanishing Animals

A Biology of Extinction and Survival. By Vinzenz Ziswiler. (English edition revised by Fred and Pille Bunnell.) Pp. x+133. (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd.; New York: Springer-Verlag, 1967.) 35s. net, cased; 25s. paperback.

IN the past few years there has been such a spate of propaganda books about the extermination of animals, and the devastation of the wild, that some readers may be excused for beginning to tire of so much talk and so little action. This short book, however, gives an excellent summary of the whole subject of extinction and conservation, and examines with sound common sense the reasons why the protection of nature is desirable.

The author, like many propagandists, rather overdoes the horrors—photographs of the slaughter of fur seals on the Pribilofs in the last century do not tell us that the herd on those islands now numbers about one and a half million and is cropped scientifically without danger to the stock; wastepaper baskets made from elephants' feet may be tasteless souvenirs, but we are not told that the elephants of East Africa multiply so fast when undisturbed that thousands must be killed every year to keep their numbers within reasonable bounds. He does, on the other hand, take a well deserved swipe at trophy hunting and killing for pleasure.

The chapters on indirect extermination by the spoliation and pollution of natural habitats, and on the biology of extinction, give a good review of what is happening, to man's ultimate loss, throughout the world. In discussing what can be done to halt the progress of destruction the author stresses the need for research on animals and their environments, and describes some outstanding examples of what has been done in conserving and increasing the numbers of animals that were until recently threatened with imminent extermination. Such techniques should be applied to others, for, with the exception of certain species that are few in numbers from the processes of nature and not from harassing by man, there is no reason why flourishing populations should not be preserved to be exploited for economic or aesthetic purposes. The prospect could be bright, even in the face of the human population explosion, but hope is not encouraged by a glance at what has happened to the whales. For many years biologists have been paid to investigate and advise on whale fisheries. They have studied the problems deeply and arrived at conclusions showing the annual crop of whales that can be harvested without damage to the stocks, and how stocks can be increased. But governments, swayed by the interests of big business, have ignored the advice they have bought; the blue whale may already be beyond the point of no return, and the fin and sei whales are rapidly following it. What can the biologists do, besides talking, to prevent the world becoming a man-made desert? As the author shows, there is hope if they can demonstrate to the tycoons that there is money to be made out of conserving the world's flora and fauna.

L. HARRISON MATTHEWS

FAMOUS VIVIPAROUS QUADRUPEDS

The Imperial Collection of Audubon Animals

The Quadrupeds of North America. Original text by John James Audubon and the Rev. John Bachman. Edited and with new text by Victor H. Cahalane. Illustrated by John James Audubon and John Woodhouse Audubon. Pp. xvi+308 (150 full colour prints). (Feltham Middx.; The Hamlyn Publishing Group, Ltd., 1968. Published for Country Life Books.) 105s. net.

THIS is a coffee-table book with a difference. Unlike many such books, this one must be read as well as looked at,