

confined to the Channel Isles; eleven, mainly whales, are vagrants; thirteen are established introductions, such as the rabbit and the coypu; six, including the introduced muskrat, are extinct; and three are domestic animals, more or less gone wild. There is no section devoted to conservation, perhaps because the Mammal Society has always left this aspect to the Fauna Preservation Society. Another omission is that of the three vagrant seals, ringed, harp, and hooded, and the walrus, although all the vagrant whales are included. The book is illustrated with mostly functional photographs and excellent drawings by the well-known bird artist, Robert Gillmor.

RICHARD FITTER.

WHILE SOME TREES STAND. By GARTH CHRISTIAN. Newnes. 21s.

The title of this book derives from the writings of Sir Thomas Browne, "Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks." The theme is that our landscape, shaped by good husbandry through many centuries, is now being tampered with on such an ever-increasing scale, that our wildlife and its environment is being affected drastically and thrown out of balance. There is little doubt that our wild plants and animals were safer behind the walls with which the great landowners enclosed their land. In a pleasantly discursive style he shows how the breaking up of the big estates, intensive cultivation, the grubbing up of mixed woodlands and the extensive planting of conifers; has caused the decline of such species as the nightingale, peregrine falcon, sparrow hawk, hedgehog, red squirrel, weasel, and stoat, although encouraging the increase of others such as the badger, fox, hare, and some kinds of deer. He makes a plea for a responsible policy of land management to ensure the continuance of a rich variety of vegetation on which all creatures depend ultimately, and points out that stupidity rather than ill-will has driven many species to the verge of extinction.

This is an all too familiar story, but Mr. Christian brings it home to the reader by personal anecdotes and experiences based on his adopted area of Sussex. He concludes that the possibility of the land of Britain continuing to have "peaceful, wild, remote, and altogether beautiful" stretches of countryside depends on more scientific research into the complicated problems of managing our landscape, on the strength of the county naturalists' trust movement, but perhaps most of all on there being more people who *care*. This book should do much to swell their ranks.

JOHN CLEGG.

ATLANTA MY SEAL. By H. G. HURRELL. William Kimber. 25s.

The Hurrells have a reputation for keeping and studying animals; at various times they have had otters, pine martens, polecats, and badgers, and the author is well known for his writings on birds. It is not therefore surprising to read that when a young female grey seal was found, stranded on the nearby Devon coast, he assumed responsibility for her and, with the help of his family, brought off the difficult feat of rearing her. The book's main interest, however, centres on the author's account of how he taught the seal, Atlanta, to respond to hand signals, the spoken word, and finally to printed letters and words. Atlanta can accurately associate with the command—or, as Mr. Hurrell more often seems to put it to her, the polite request—the action that is expected of her. He is well aware of the chance of misinterpreting the results of his tuition and he discusses the kind of

M

involuntary deception which occurred in the "Clever Hans" case. One limitation to Atlanta's learning ability seems to be her difficulty in taking an initial interest in the particular test set for her, and this was most marked in counting problems. It took the author a long time to get her arithmetic lessons going at all, but at the end of the book she could apparently count up to ten with fair accuracy.

Atlanta has become known to countless television viewers and this book will add to her admirers. It is thorough, but pleasantly and lightly written against the background of Dartmoor and some of its wild and human inhabitants, and well illustrated. Equally satisfying is it that Atlanta was still alive at the end of the book.

GRAHAM DES FORGES.

THE DESERT, by A. STARKER LEOPOLD; THE SEA, by LEONARD ENGEL; THE POLES, by WILLEY LEY; THE MOUNTAINS, by LORUS J. MILNE and MARGERY MILNE. *Life Nature Library*, Time-Life International. 32s. 6d. each.

These are the first four volumes of a series of nature books, each consisting of an introductory essay on the main heading, and subsidiary articles on some aspects of it, such as the animals and the plants of each environment. They are all interesting and superbly illustrated. The same author writes every essay in each book and the style is popular. Of course as the scope of each volume is so vast and its size comparatively small—190 pages including copious illustrations, bibliography, and index—the subjects can only be dealt with in a restricted way, but the treatment is not superficial in a derogatory sense. The final essays in each book deal with man's relationship to the particular environment, and these, together with the introductory essays, I found the most absorbing.

One can, of course, pick holes now and again. Page 147 of *The Sea*, for instance, says "the only walrus left roam a few remote areas of Greenland and the Arctic", which gives a wrong impression of the walrus populations and is in fact contradicted in *The Poles*, which gives the present-day walrus population as 70,000.

A brief description of the first volume will perhaps give a further idea of the scope of this series. In his introductory essay to *The Desert*, Dr. Starker Leopold explains what a desert really is and, with the aid of a map, briefly describes the main deserts of the world. Following a wonderful series of pictures of the Sahara, he writes about the creation of deserts, the people, animals and plants of deserts, on the eternal problem of water and on man's struggle against the desert environment. Finally, we read how, with the present enormous strides in technical achievement, desert lands are being brought into the service of mankind at an ever accelerating speed.

C. L. BOYLE.

SNAKES OF AFRICA. By R. I. ISEMONGER. Nelson. 21s.

Having had a special love for snakes ever since, when a schoolboy, I was bitten and nearly died through carelessly handling an adder, it was with pleasant anticipation that I opened Richard Isemonger's book. It is an odd fact that, sooner or later, every field herpetologist, no matter how experienced, must ruefully admit that he has been bitten by the very animal he loves, and the author is no exception. Yet like all devoted snake-men he exonerates the serpent from all blame, and continues with his dangerous pursuit. This is a book full of fascination and excitement spiced with humour