

Life Management Institution of Washington, D.C.) at Fredericton, New Brunswick, it is now known that the eastern panther still survives and is widely but sparingly distributed in parts of its former range—from Florida to Nova Scotia. Not only has it survived, but though a slow breeder—it breeds only every second or third year, with an average litter of two cubs—it is increasing. Moreover, it is believed to have safely passed the low point in numbers from which there can be no recovery. This therefore is an encouraging story which will have special appeal to all who have at heart the interests of the wild creatures. The author has provided a careful analysis of a sample of the many sight and other records, besides describing the creature, its attributes, behaviour and mode of life. That this surely is a case for special protection is indisputable.

C. R. S. P.

TALKING BIRDS. By MAXWELL KNIGHT. G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., London, 1960. 10s. 6d.

An ability to imitate the human voice and other sounds is a curious attribute of certain birds. Two species able to utter the sounds most accurately (the grey parrot of Africa and the hill mynah of parts of South-Eastern Asia) are not known to practice vocal mimicry in the wild state except, presumably, to learn the natural calls from their parents or others of their own kind. The mocking birds, lyre bird, our native starling and others do, in nature, imitate a variety of other sounds, but there is no evidence that such a gift bestows any advantage on the performer and, as the author suggests, it may be that the bird derives a certain pleasure from the practice. The parrot, for example, will often utter its repertoire when it is alone.

Whatever the explanation of this phenomenon, the talking bird is popular and this book will give the pet owner a wealth of excellent advice ranging from the selection and purchase of the bird, whether parrot, macaw, cockatoo, budgerigar, mynah or crow, to its requirements in captivity—living accommodation, diet, taming and training and other important items of management that ensure its welfare.

J. J. Y.

A SEAL FLIES BY. By R. H. PEARSON. Rupert Hart-Davis, 1959. 16s.

This is a highly diverting account of the hand-rearing of two female common or sand-seals (*Phoca vitulina*) taken from the