

# Book Reviews

**So Small a World**, by Guy Mountfort. Hutchinson, £3.95

Wherever my path has crossed Guy Mountfort's, in places as far apart as the Coto Doñana and the Galapagos, he was scheming to protect nature – and the number of places he has visited is prodigious. Many of them have benefited from his passionate concern. In this book he tells about some of the more fascinating wildernesses to which his travels through a hundred countries have taken him. Most of us may think of him primarily as an ornithologist, but here he is rather what used to be called a 'natural philosopher', and the trees, mammals and primitive peoples receive as much attention as the birds.

His earth-girdling journeys, which have made this seem to him so small a world, have also made him exceptionally aware of how much there is to lose and how little time there is to save for posterity the beauties that have given him such joy, whether among the peaks of the Karakoram, the backwaters of the Sunderbans, the deserts of Jordan or the rain forests of Indonesia.

He has witnessed so much destruction that he might well have been driven to believe that there is little hope in the rearguard actions being fought by conservationists. Quite the contrary! While he ruefully accepts that only a fraction of Africa's once fabulous wildlife still remains, he insists that, thanks to the pioneers of fauna preservation in the early years of this century (surely the FPS's greatest contribution to conservation) substantial numbers of most species still remain for our delight. If the worst can be avoided in Africa, then why not elsewhere? For Mountfort, Operation Tiger is simply justification for urgent operations elsewhere. For instance, if the Charles Darwin Foundation can do so much for the Galapagos, why not an Alfred Russel Wallace Foundation for the threatened Aru islands? 'We still have in our hands the power to protect the quality of life on earth', he concludes. 'Though time is running out, I cling to my belief that wisdom will prevail'.

G. T. CORLEY SMITH

**Civilized Man's Eight Deadly Sins**, by Konrad Lorenz. Translated by Marjorie Latze. Methuen, £1.60

This is a small, profound book, written by one of the prophets of our generation, on a theme that haunts the minds of *Oryx* readers. I was at Seewiesen in 1967 when Lorenz came home from receiving an honorary degree at Yale, pleased and tickled by the orator's epitome of him, 'father of ethology, mother of ducklings'; the same attainments brought him a Nobel prize in 1973. It is in the nature of such men to think deep thoughts and convey them in words that people can understand.

The eight deadly sins themselves, 'infiltrating humanity like malignant growths', spring no surprises. The eighth, incidentally, is the build-up of nuclear weapons, and, being the easiest of all to counteract, it gets only one page. He says the book was written four years ago, and because the drama of man and biosphere moves so fast he is afraid that what he wrote then may seem old hat, and that enlightened public opinion will by now have passed his sermon by. He need not have had such fears. The book gets better as it goes on; when I had finished its 80 pages I read them again, and got even more reward the second time.

To me, the most timely of all his messages is in the long chapter headed Indoctrinability, where he exposes the dangerous false doctrine, started originally by human behaviourists and now broadcast through the mass media: 'the untruth that all men are potentially equal', that 'all men would be equal if they could develop under the same external conditions'. It has mushroomed from a Freudian cult into an article of faith held out to all mankind. Its adherents slander heretics and shut their ears to