

## Book reviews

checklist. There is also an interesting chapter on conservation problems and policy. Wouldn't it be nice if the book managed to persuade the Icelandic Government to drop its flagrant abuse of the 'scientific whaling' exemption in the International Whaling Convention under which the Icelandic commercial whaling industry is being kept alive. . . .

Written by Mark Carwardine, a naturalist and consultant to the World Wildlife Fund, the book is beautifully illustrated with 90 colour photographs. It is good value at £9.50 and has the merit of being small enough to fit conveniently into a coat pocket. A must for any naturalist planning to visit 'the Jewel of the North'.

*Simon Lyster, International Treaties Officer for the World Wildlife Fund.*

### **The Botany of Mangroves**

P.B. Tomlinson

Cambridge University Press, 1986, 413 pp, HB £47.50 (\$69.50)

Mangroves occur throughout many parts of the world and are invariably encountered by most tropical travellers because they occupy the most sheltered parts of shore lines. At one time people did not like to enter them because of their reputation as infested swamps, but to the ecologist, naturalist and conservationist they represent an intriguing interface between the marine and terrestrial communities. Nowadays they are also considered as ideal arenas for water sports, and the ever-increasing marine leisure industry is creating havoc in places like the Everglades. Mangrove ecosystems are extremely rich and varied, containing a wealth of different organisms of considerable importance to complex food chains, but are also a major source of revenue to fishing, forestry and agriculture. A lot is known about them, but because they represent diverse habitats when viewed on a world scale they are rarely considered in one volume. This book aims to plug that gap. It is a concise compendium of taxonomic, geographical, ecological, floristic, architectural, morphological, anatomical and physiological information of mangrove specializations, and for this reason it will be of considerable value to students and professionals alike. I can warmly recommend it.

*C.J. Humphries, Botany Department, British Museum (Natural History), London, UK.*

*Book reviews*

### **Amboseli: Nothing Short of a Miracle**

David Lovatt Smith

East African Publishing House Ltd, PO Box 30571, Nairobi, Kenya, 1986, £8.00, K Shs 98.50, US\$12.00.

Purchasers of this 95-page paperback could be misled by its title because it is neither a guidebook nor a history of Amboseli. The 'miracle' of the title refers to the sudden enormous increase, late in 1957, in the output of the springs that feed the Ngong Narok swamp.

The author, who at the time was Assistant Warden of the then much larger Amboseli National Reserve relates how by the frantic efforts of its skeleton staff the added water was made to flow along an ancient and partly blocked depression, now known as the Simek river, and then, by means of a cutting, through higher ground to the edge of the long-dry Amboseli lake 6 km away, where it created the small Conch lake, and later still the Longolong swamp.

These events, which are largely unknown or forgotten only 30 years after they occurred, resulted in a six-fold increase in available water in the core area of Amboseli and a consequent respite in the then critical competition for watering places between wildlife and the ever-increasing Maasai herds.

The author tells his tale in a straightforward manner and the book is well illustrated, mainly with his own colour and black-and-white photographs depicting the events he describes. One or two of the photographs could have been better reproduced, and something has gone wrong with the colour gradient of the relief map on pages 24 and 25. An oddity of the text is the general, but not invariable, use of capital initial letters in the names of animals and plants; this becomes irritating when the yellow-barked acacia or fever tree is referred to as the 'Yellow Fever tree', seemingly implying some connection with the disease of that name.

The background of some of the pictures shows the tremendous change the vegetation of Amboseli has undergone. This is very clearly seen in a pair of photographs of the same view from Observation Hill taken in 1956 and 1985. The first shows the fever-tree-fringed lower end of the Ngong Narok swamp and looks across the plains

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