

Book Reviews

A Different Kind of Country by Raymond F. Dasmann. Macmillan, New York, \$5.95.

With this restrained philippic against the Gadarene tendencies of his countrymen in the latter half of the twentieth century, Ray Dasmann finally assumes the mantle of Aldo Leopold, which has been growing on him for some time. Conservation badly needs its prophet, and Frank Fraser Darling, the other major candidate, still has not distilled his wisdom into the book that we know is in him. I am not forgetting Lewis Mumford, a major prophet indeed, but one who was driven into the wildlife and conservation field by pressures in the social sciences. What we have not had until now is a prophet driven by pressures within the field of wildlife to synthesise his philosophy into an ecology of man.

A Different Kind of Country is a book that will stand re-reading. Its central theme is the need to preserve diversity in the future environment of mankind, at a time when all the technological pressures are towards a deadening uniformity of concrete buildings and plastic grass. For ultimately the only uniform habitat is the desert, and only very specialised groups of men, the Beduin, the Eskimos, and some modern city-dwellers, have been able to adapt themselves satisfactorily to desert life. The prospect before us is a menacing one, no less than the progressive destruction of the human environment, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the places where we live and recreate ourselves, by technological development and its concomitant wastes. Eventually, man being a thinking as well as a highly conservative animal, these trends will be reversed, though doubtless too late to save the world as we know it today, with its multi-form diversity of habitat and wildlife. The dawning of that moment of truth in the collective consciousness of mankind has been notably advanced by Ray Dasmann's book.

RICHARD FITTER

Penguins by Bernard Stonehouse. Barker, 21s. (USA: Golden Press, New York.)

Three cheers for the unconstipated scientist, the man who without sacrificing the integrity of his discipline is prepared to write popularly about his subject. This is a splendidly unstuffy treatment of a splendidly unstuffy group of animals. The blurb about the 'World of Animals' series, of which this is the latest one to appear, gives the impression that each book is about one species. But this volume, and presumably the Ken Backhouse one to come, on seals, is concerned with groups of closely related species. Editor Winwood Reade please note. The blurb about *Penguins* is refreshingly objective, and the ten lines about the author very modest. He must be one of the world's top ten students of the family of birds that itself is undisputed 'Top of the Avian Pops'.

The book is well illustrated with twenty-one line drawings and maps and seventy photographs, 16 in colour. It is difficult not to express a little disappointment at the reproduction of the colour plates, which is not up to the modern standard, and I would like to have seen a better photograph of a penguin under water than the one on page 27, which could easily have been obtained through a glass tank at either Len Hill's *Birdland* in Gloucestershire, or in Frankfurt Zoo. But this is a small point.

Bernard Stonehouse tells us that penguins are neither rare nor exclusively polar. The eighteen or so species are, however, confined to the southern hemi-