

The Sea of Sands and Mists
Nigel Winsor
 Century, 1989, 199pp., HB
 £16.95

Nigel Winsor's account of the Royal Geographical Society's Wahiba Sands project describes some of the scientific work of the expedition in broad terms while also presenting the story behind its organization and practical workings. This sort of book is not easy to write as such works often fall between two stools: the travelogue with little hard fact, and the dry scientific account of little interest to the general reader.

Most of the factual information is in the central chapters describing the work of the earth scientists, the life science team and those involved in socio-economic studies. There is a good overview of the findings of the project by the scientific co-ordinator, Roderick Dutton.

The first three chapters are largely concerned with the decision-making process at the RGS with regard to what areas of the world to investigate, and how the expedition was initiated, organized and funded. Then follows a chapter on the building of the base and the initial reconnaissance of the area prior to the start of the detailed investigations. Because of their relatively small size and considerable physical and biological diversity, the Sands are a very important field laboratory for investigation of the effects of both natural and man-made influences on arid systems. The Sands support a number of distinct nomadic tribal groups whose lives are being changed by their use of the motor vehicle and other Western influences. However, their principal means of making a living—the Sands—has not changed and the value of such large-scale

investigations is to try to determine how development for the benefit of such people can be undertaken without it affecting their resource base.

This book will appeal particularly to those interested in the organization of scientific expeditions and what they can achieve. More scientific detail can be found in the *Journal of Oman Studies* (3), but, for a general overview, this book will provide a blend of the descriptive science and the flavour of the expedition's organization, management and practical problems.

David M. Jones.

Return of the Whooping Crane

Robin W. Doughty
 University of Texas Press,
 Austin, Texas, 1989, 182 pp.,
 HB \$24.95

The whooping crane is one of the great success stories of conservation. By 1944 the entire stock had declined to 21 birds, and its extinction seemed inevitable. However, thanks to captive breeding programmes in Patuxent, Maryland, and Baraboo, Wisconsin, the numbers have been recovering steadily. The preservation effort has been expanded by the introduction of a second flock raised by foster sandhill-crane parents migrating between Gray's Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho, and Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. (There are still further proposals to reintroduce cranes into wildland habitats in Mississippi, Wisconsin and Florida.) Through this sustained conservation campaign, the crane's numbers have rebounded to more than 200 birds in wild and captive flocks today and seem set to keep on expanding.

Although the book has only 182 pages, the large-size format means the text is extensive. Author Robin Doughty, a biogeographer at the University of Texas and a long-established conservationist, presents a scientific assessment of all aspects of the species's natural history and lifestyle, together with a detailed account of the conservation campaign. While the text is solidly documented throughout, Doughty presents his story in semi-popular style. Together with some of the best bird photographs I have ever seen, this all makes for an exceptional publication: I strongly recommend it.

Professor Norman Myers.

Lemurs of the Lost World: Exploring the Forests and Crocodile Caves of Madagascar

Janet Wilson
 Impact Books, 1990, 216 pp.,
 PB £5.95

Lemurs of the Lost World is a popular account of the Crocodile Caves of Ankarana Expedition to northern Madagascar. The site itself has already been described in *Oryx* and this book fleshes out the ups and downs of the expedition itself. Essentially a travel book for the general reader, it is useful, lively background reading for anyone contemplating organizing or participating in an expedition. There is a poignant note; having got the reader thoroughly interested in the Ankarana massif, its caves, wildlife and forested canyons, a short postscript tells us that the area around the camp has been logged over despite its being within a forest reserve. One hopes that the rest of the site fares better, with the attention drawn to it by the Expedition.

Roger Wilson.