

BOOKS RECEIVED

Godsall Bottriel L., 1987: King Cheetah — The story of the quest. E. J. Brill. Leiden 1—241, 4 colour plates, 55 black-and-white plates. 24.95 USdol. (hard cover).

Cryptozoology is a branch of science many people do not take too seriously. However, mythical, extraordinary animals which exist in the folklore of the nations of all continents have always caught the imagination of man. It is astonishing that the earth is believed to be so well known and yet in the last century a high number of large animals have been discovered in various odd places. One of the latest is the King Cheetah, a legendary striped cheetah of African continent. The common spotted cheetah has been well known to human beings for at least 5 thousand years. But throughout such a vast period of time there were no accounts of any strange abbreviation of pelage, cheetahs have "always" looked the same. It was not until the end of nineteenth century, that some rumours about the existence of a large striped cheetah in southern Africa came to the knowledge of the public.

The book recommends itself as an unique story of the quest for this mythical beast. It is not an ordinary recording of the search itself, but a story which reaches far in the past and simultaneously runs into the future. The story tells of difficulties of preparation, the 18 months of preliminary planning, the gaining of support and the raising of funds. It reflects the happiness of Lena and Paul Bottriell when they at last, in 1978, launched an expedition to southern Africa and presents an extremely readable account of field research, illustrated with beautiful photos and descriptions of the plant and animal kingdom.

The book brilliantly portrays their contagious love of Africa and its nature. The reader takes part in 14 months of searching; sharing the personal risks of Rhodesia during the war; ballooning over the Kruger National Park (South Africa); and finally feeling the bitter taste of failure. The Bottriells did not find the legend alive in the wild, though the expedition was a great success from another point of view. Many skins of the King Cheetah were found and documented, thus a place for the King Cheetah was assured in the public consciousness and the question of its status re-opened.

Life itself, which brings so many sudden and unexpected changes, soon confirmed that Bottriells efforts had been not in vain. Little more than a year after the completion of the fieldwork the first King Cheetahs were born in captivity from common spotted ones in South Africa. This confirmed the author's suspicion that this legendary beast exists in the wild today and that it is a new geographical race of cheetah in process of evolving.

In previous times cheetahs inhabited vast areas from the steppes of Central Asia to the southern Africa Cape. Gradually the expansion of man's activities has caused them to retreat from their natural, open habitats towards bushy and woody places so the cheetahs have been forced to adapt. This process is continuing throughout the natural world, we need only to have Bottriells' eyes to notice it.

For all those with an interest in natural history or nature conservation, „King Cheetah” will captivate the reader; offering an escape into a dream world of expedition adventure which few people get the opportunity to experience.

Henryk Okarma

Cade T. J., (paintings by R. D. Digby), 1982: The falcons of the World. Cornell Univ. Press. 1—188. Ithaca, New York.

The work contains two parts. Part I includes: introduction, characteristics of the genus *Falco*, classification, distribution and wanderings, food adaptations, body size and flight properties, hunting success (efficiency of hunting), reverse sexual dimorphism (greater dimensions of the body of females in relation to males), social

behaviour and reproduction, falcons and man. Part II contains description of 39 species of *Falconiformes*, maps of their distribution, references, and index of names. The text includes 18 tables and figures, and each species description is illustrated with a colourful picture of the bird.

The popular reader in the western world has received thus another book on falcons which is an example of the assiduity and striving for perfection of the authors, not restricted by financial barriers and realizing an accepted publication plan. The artistic value of the book is raised by the fineness and graphic mastery of the painter R. David Digby. This is thus one more example of a greatly successful teamwork.

However, since no work is quite perfect, the remarks below will contribute, I hope, as a constructive criticism to a more perfect form of the further editions of the book. The problems, I want to mention, are those of zoogeography and food adaptations since these are in the focus of my side-line interests.

A cursory comparison of the maps in Cade's book with the data presented in the atlas of the distribution of the birds of prey in South Africa suggests the necessity of certain corrections in the future editions (Boshoff, A. F., Vernon, C. J., Brooke, R. K., 1983: Historical Atlas of the Diurnal Raptors of the Cape Province (*Aves: Falconiformes*) Ann. Cape Prov. Mus. (Nat. Hist.), 14, 7: 173—297).

A specific coquetry of the American authors includes also the ignorance of the basic European literature on a given problem. "The greatest in the World" has again not protected the author of the monograph from overlooking the basic literature on the flight characteristics of the *Falconiformes* (Christensen, S., Nielsen, B. P., Porter, R. F., Willis, I., 1975: Flight Identification of European Raptors. *Notatki Ornitologiczne*, 16, 5: 1—144. Warszawa), or the functional anatomy of bird head (Barnikol, A., 1952: Korrelationen in der Ausgestaltung der Schädelform bei Vögeln. *Morphologisches Jahrbuch*, 92, 3: 373—414). On pp. 401—407 Barnikol (*op. cit.*) presented a comparative analysis of the heads of *Strigiformes* and *Falconiformes*.

The peculiar mode of food taking by *Falconiformes* in which the prey is fragmented (lower kinetic properties of the skull in comparison with owls) causes that many characteristic features of food digestion by them is similar or even identical as in certain species of *Strigiformes* (Little owl, Sparrowhawk owl, etc). Controlled feeding of three owl species under experimental conditions (Tawny owl, Long-eared owl, and Barn owl) the osteological composition of owl pellet depends on: (1) the species and age of the owl, (2) the age and species of the prey (*Acta Orn.*, 14, 2: 25—38. 1974). The review of the specialistic literature on the problem disclosed again many gaps in it which will be easily filled in the future editions of the book "The Falcons of the World". The most important literature items which would be worth to be added to the reference list: *The Wilson Bulletin*, 87, 4: 514—519, 1975; *Journal für Ornithologie*, 121, 2: 186—199. 1980; *Journal of Zoology*, London, 192: 283—293, 1980; *The Wilson Bulletin*, 85, 2: 178—181. 1973; *The Condor*, 76: 45—61. 1974; *Ibidem*, 78, 3: 331—336. 1976; *Ibidem*, 87: 111—115. 1985; *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego DCCXCII*, *Prace Zoologiczne* — *Zeszyt 32*: 29—58. 1986; *Ardea*, 72: 1—92. 1984; *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis*, No 3, *Prace Zoologiczne I*: 75—88. 1962).

Andrzej L. Ruprecht

Clutton-Brock J., 1987: *A natural history of domesticated mammals*. Cambridge Univ. Press, British Museum (Natural History). 1—208.

Książka ta jest popularnym wprowadzeniem do historii udomowionych gatunków ssaków — tych gatunków, które już w czasach Imperium Rzymskiego były szeroko rozpowszechnione i wykształcone jako oddzielone, rozmnażające się populacje odizolowane od swych dzikich przodków. Autorka nie zajmuje się historią udoskonaleń różnych ras zwierząt, która dokonywała się począwszy od późnego średniowiecza, czy też współczesnymi rasami i odmianami hodowanymi na skalę przemysłową.

Książka jest napisana w sposób jasny i zajmujący, złożone i często kontrowersyjne problemy wyjaśnia prosto, nie stroniąc nieraz od osobistego do nich sto-