

*Penguins.* John Sparks and Tony Soper. Angus & Robertson Ltd. \$6.50.

Penguins for some odd reason or accident are very much "in" at present. This is the second book on the subject I have been asked to review in the last six months (the other was written by Dr. Bernard Stonehouse). Though this is the larger and more comprehensive of the two, it is not so well written. My guess is that neither of its authors has ever seen a penguin in the wild. That authors have not been in the field with the animals they write about does not automatically preclude them from writing a good and lively book, but it does make such an accomplishment more difficult.

The first chapter, which is on penguins as birds, is the most interesting though perhaps rather untidily written. The remaining chapters deal with courtship and nest-making, family life and return to the sea, food and predators, the evolution of penguins, their discovery, their exploitation and notes on the various species. There is a fairly extensive list of references, a short appendix on keeping penguins in captivity, and an index.

Illustrations (photographs, drawings, charts and maps) are plentiful and good. An unusual but useful feature is the series of full-page coloured drawings, with attendant notes, of each of the 17 species recognised by the authors.

With so much material being used at second hand, minor misprints and errors are inevitable. For example, on page 56 Adelies are said to have travelled at a speed of eight miles an hour in a homing experiment; surely eight miles a *day* is what is meant. Stephens Island has become St. Stephens Island on page 21 and Caughley is spelt Cuahley on page 243. Regrettably the authors refer to "the increased logistic capability" and the "bio-economics" of Antarctica on page 128, but such gobbledygook is mercifully rare.

This is a good book on the general biology of penguins and it is gratifying that New Zealand workers on the species are so well documented in it. The authors have done their reading widely and well.

— G.R.W.



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