

## BOOKS RECEIVED

**Meester J. A. J., Rautenbach I. L., Dippenaar N. J. & Baker C. M., 1986: Classification of Southern African mammals.** Transvaal Museum Monograph No. 5, 359 pp.

The edition of this book achieves an intense period of research on the classification of southern African mammals. We must realize that since Ellerman, Morrison-Scott and Hayman's (1953) "Southern African mammals 1758—1951: a reclassification", more than 30 years have passed and mammals from this part of the African continent were among the most intensively studied ones all over the world. It especially concerns such systematic groups as *Insectivora*, *Chiroptera*, *Rodentia* and *Lagomorpha*. The book by four mammalogists from the RSA summarizes the results of these studies in a form of consensus classification. As many as 328 species of mammals, occurring south of the Zambezi and Cunene Rivers (between 15 and 35°S), have been listed in the book. Some non-native, introduced species such as *Sciurus carolinensis*, *Dama dama* or *Hemitragus jemlahicus* were excluded. All families, genera and species are keyed, and full synonymies are provided for genera, species and subspecies. Additionally, the characteristics of each species is enriched with the data on its distribution, especially detailed for the southern part of Africa. The classification proposed by the authors deals with 15 orders of mammals and, what is more important, seems to be the most acceptable one. In large extent this classification takes into consideration the latest data from literature (last cited papers are from 1984—1985, and even 1986!), and critical opinions from eminent taxonomists, who reviewed earlier versions of the work.

The monograph is not, however, devoid of some trivial errors, mainly of technical nature. For example, I did not find a paper by Robbins *et al.* (1983) which reviews the systematics of the African bat genus *Scotophilus* in the bibliography section, despite its quotation in the text (p. 59), and the name of J. Fairon is misspelled. More important, in the light of Smeenk's work (1982), the given date of the description of *Pipistrellus kuhlii* (Kuhl, 1817) and *Miniopterus schreibersii* (Kuhl, 1817) is improper. Kuhl's monograph "Die deutschen Fledermäuse" originally appeared at Hanau in 1817 and later was reprinted in two installments at Frankfurt am Main in 1818 and 1819. I also regret that the authors have not taken into account the results of the doctoral thesis of van Cakenberghe (1984) on systematics and distribution of *Nycteridae*, among which 6 species is known from southern Africa.

Insignificant shortcomings do not depreciate, of course, the value of the whole, entertainingly and very lucidly written book, which can be treated as a perfect complementation to "The mammals of the Southern African subregion" by Smithers (1983). Certainly "Classification of Southern African mammals" will be a basic source of taxonomic data on mammals from this interesting region of the world for several years.

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