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Reviews

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MAMMALS OF NORTHERN ALASKA ON THE ARCTIC SLOPE. By JAMES W. BEE and E. RAYMOND HALL. Univ. Kansas Museum of Natural History, Misc. Publ. 8, 1956. Paper, \$1.00; cloth, \$4.00.

Having spent some time encamped with these two workers on the Arctic slope, the reviewer can understand the painstaking quality of this work. He remembers the immense detail of work in trapping and recording the microtenes, and it is on this section of the mammals of northern Alaska that their contribution is particularly valuable. Bee and Hall would be called systematists, but they carry that title in the newest sense of the profession, of those workers who recognize that similarities or difference in behaviour and ecology have significance in the establishment of specific rank.

The treatment of the microtenes is full and new. We learn of their specific associations with different plant complexes and terrain and even food preferences are given for some species. It is when the authors come to species which they did not study intimately that one realizes the excellence of the work on those they did. It is a little surprising, for example, to find the coyote listed as an old inhabitant of the Arctic slope, or even of Alaska at all. The probability is that the coyote is a camp follower into the far north and that, as elsewhere, it has increased wherever extermination or reduction of the wolf has raised the ceiling of opportunity.

Again, in the interesting passage on migration of caribou, the extensive aerial reconnaissances of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service appear to have been ignored. The suggestion that the rut in Dall sheep was "well along" by 19th August is based on observations of fighting. This would mean birth of the lambs in January and February, an unlikely event in the Arctic winter. Lambs seen in June at close quarters by Leopold and myself were certainly much younger than this.

The final section of the book, on characteristics of the mammalian fauna, and on the biotic communities of the Arctic slope, is closely observed and tersely written, a most welcome addition to the literature of Arctic ecology.

F. D.
Sarlington

JOHN AND WILLIAM BARTRAM'S AMERICA. Edited by HELEN GERE CRUICKSHANK. The Devin-Adair Company, New York. \$5.00.

This is the fourth book in the American Naturalists series.