

The Blue Jay Bookshelf

COMMON WEEDS OF THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES, AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION BY VEGETATIVE CHARACTERS. By K. F. Best and A. C. Budd. Publication 1136, Research Branch, Canada Department of Agriculture, Ottawa. 1964. 70 pp. \$1.00 paper bound, \$2.00 cloth bound from Queen's Printer, Ottawa, Canadian Government Bookshops or local booksellers (including our own, Box 1121, Regina).

About 180 common introduced and native weeds are described in non-technical terms and illustrated with small black-and-white line drawings. A key consisting of a succession of contrasting statements about easily-observed vegetative characteristics (mostly concerning root, stem and leaves) enables the user to arrive at the Latin name of his unknown plant. In the second part of the book the plants are arranged in alphabetical order by their Latin names. There the user will find the corresponding common name, a word description and an illustration of each plant. If these do not match his unknown plant he must return to the key and re-examine every step until he finds the pair of contrasting statements at which he made the wrong selection. By this method he will ultimately arrive at the correct name for his plant if it is among the 180 included in this book. Although not applicable to all small seedlings or to the rosette stages of some tall-stemmed plants, the chief advantage of this book is its aid in identification of most of the common weeds before they reach flowering or fruiting stages.—*Jack F. Alex, Regina.*

GREAT ARC OF THE WILD SHEEP. By James L. Clark. 1965. University of Oklahoma Press, 246 pages, illustrated, \$6.95.

This book will probably become the standard work of reference upon wild sheep. It lists the many species and links them in a great arc which starts in the Mediterranean and curves through Turkestan, Tibet, Siberia into the Rockies and down to southern

California. Each subspecies is described in detail and illustrated, and many interesting stories are retold. It would appear that the big rams are the most coveted prize of the big game hunter, and as they inhabit the highest peaks in the wildest areas, it is very difficult to locate and obtain specimens. The descriptions of Marco Polo in China in the 13th century and Coronado in the United States in the 16th century give an historical connection with the ages of exploration, as do the hunting stories in the 19th century by Rudyard Kipling and Theodore Roosevelt in the remote mountainous and hill areas of the great arc. The author is eminently qualified as he is the director emeritus of preparation and installation in the American Museum of Natural History, one of the best American animal sculptors, and has hunted for wild sheep in the Russian Pamirs and other areas. This book is a must for any library, but it is unlikely to be read as widely as books of a more general nature.—*Thomas White, Regina.*

WILD CATS. By C. B. Colby. 1964. Duell, Sloan & Pearce, New York, illustrated, \$3.95.

Mr. Colby is a well known writer on natural history subjects. This book gives general information and descriptions of members of the cat family and concentrates upon the better known species. Each cat is described and illustrated in side view with photographs largely taken from the records of the New York Zoological Society. There are tracks which he has tried to make typical for each species, and also descriptions of how variations can occur. There are interesting stories about the largest tigers, which live in Siberia, as well as the smallest ocelot and jaguar of Central America, and the serval of Africa. The common characteristics of many of these cats are frequently described and the reader discovers more about the feline family. Although the photographs are not as good as they might be, this book is a good reference.—*Thomas White, Regina.*