Guide to LIVING MAMMALS

J. E. WEBB

*Professor of Zoology, Westfield College
University of London*

J. A. WALLWORK

*Reader in Zoology, Westfield College,
University of London*

J. H. ELGOOD

*Formerly Associate Professor of Zoology,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

ISBN 978-1-349-04914-1 ISBN 978-1-349-04912-7 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-04912-7

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First published 1977 by
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
London and Basingstoke
Associated companies in New York Dublin
Melbourne Johannesburg and Madras

ISBN 978-0-333-21696-5

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Preface

This Guide to the Living Mammals is the second in a series intended to cover the animal kingdom and to provide, through an annotated classification of the groups, a basic understanding of the animals they contain. Like the first volume, Guide to Invertebrate Animals, most of the material and its mode of presentation has been used for a number of years in the training of students so that the mammal guide has evolved slowly as a result of this experience.

Although the concept developed in these books is the same, that is the learning of structure and relationships of animals through classification, they differ in a number of ways. In the mammals we are considering variety within a single class many of the members of which are familiar to most people. Among the invertebrates this was not the case. Here we had a wide range of organisms mostly known only to those with a special interest in animals and representing a number of fundamentally different types of structural organisation.

The mammals demonstrate perhaps better than any other group the effects of change in land form and climate on the distribution of animals. A major feature of this guide, therefore, is the inclusion of maps showing the areas occupied by all the important groups where distribution becomes significant. Such maps are, of course, only an approximation indicating the probable range of the wild forms. They do not give the present day distribution of domesticated and other mammals such as the horse, camel, rabbit and deer that have been spread by Man far beyond the areas where they are indigenous.

There are many books on the mammals, but three in particular supplement the brief treatment in this guide giving valuable additional information on classification, structure and distribution. The Principles of Classification and a Classification of Mammals by G.G. Simpson (Bull. Amer. Mus. nat. Hist. 85, 1945) is an excellent conspectus of the group. Recent Mammals of the World by S. Anderson and J. Knox Jones, Ronald Press, New York, 1967, is specially useful for the characters of the families and distribution, while the Traite de Zoologie by Grasse, volume 17 (in two parts), Masson, Paris, 1955, is an encyclopaedic treatment in French of the anatomy, behaviour and systematics of the mammalian orders.

We are again grateful to Mrs. Margaret Clarke for the preparation of the typescript for photolithography. We also thank Phil Brookes who made the drawings of the animals which are an essential part of the book.

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London, July 1976

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