

# Book Reviews

## ZOOLOGY

### Animal Communication

By Hubert and Mable Frings. 1977. Second Edition. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma. 207 pp., illus. Paper \$6.25.

When this book first appeared in 1964 it was greeted with enthusiasm because until then few biological popularists had come to grips with the engrossing subject of communication in animals. Hubert and Mable Frings, both connected with the University of Oklahoma, gathered their data from basic research in behavior, physiology, and ecology, organizing the work along functional lines so that if, for example, one wanted to learn about courtship and mating in mammals (one page), one could readily peruse these subjects in frogs and crabs too. The Frings were modest about their work: "With further knowledge, the provisional organization of communication patterns presented here — even possibly many of the "facts" — will undoubtedly need to be revised or discarded. It is stimulating to realize that impending discoveries may soon render the book itself outdated . . ."

At present, of course, animal communications is recognized as an important field of study occupying the attentions of hundreds of biologists, so that in theory one should welcome a new "revised and enlarged" edition of *Animal Communication*. In fact, however, this edition is a great disappointment. The authors, far from being "stimulated" to realize that the first edition is outdated, have done a complete about-face. They write: "It would be easy . . . to select a different set of examples to illustrate the uses of communication signals by animals. We feel, however, that little would be gained by doing so. The observations of 1964 remain valid in the late 1970's." What is easy was to leave the book as it was and

merely add a 16-page chapter on recent research since 1963, which is what the Frings have done. What would have been an effort worth publishing would have been to rewrite the entire book in the light of exciting new discoveries.

Not only is this book sadly dated, but it contains many errors which should have been corrected in a new printing. It is impossible to pinpoint them all since there are no literature citations in the text, and the bibliography, although fairly comprehensive, is of a general nature. For one species with which I am familiar, however, I found gross inaccuracies. The worst was the statement that the male giraffe arouses the female by rubbing his neck along hers — thus necking with her. Necking in giraffe is a behavior pattern confined to males. The Frings claim that giraffe spread alarm by stampeding, giving this as an example of tactile communication. Yet giraffe do not touch each other when alarmed. Finally, they twice make the simplistic statement that the male giraffe determines a female's readiness to mate by tasting her urine. To describe the complex phenomenon of Flehmen in this way is to underestimate badly the interest and capacity of their readers.

Publishers all too often re-issue non-fiction books without making certain they are really up-dated and worth republishing, a habit especially inexcusable in a university press. Worth it or not, the publishers can readvertise the work as something new and special, when in fact it is nothing of the sort. *Animal Communication* was perhaps worth buying in 1964, but I would not recommend this new edition.

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### A Second Book of Canadian Animals

By Charles Paul May. 1977. Macmillan, Toronto. 109 pp., illus. Paper \$4.95.

This 1977 paperback purports to be a new edition of the original 1964 book, but I can find no difference between the two. In any case the text is aimed at a seven- to ten-year-old child, so perhaps no up-dating was necessary. It describes briefly 26 mammals found in Canada, each pleasantly illustrated by John Crosby by a black-and-white pen drawing of an adult and of a

juvenile. It is a companion to the 1962 *A book of Canadian animals* by the same author which describes an assortment of 28 different Canadian mammals. Both books are written in a lively manner which should appeal to a thoughtful child.

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