

Book Review

Wildplaasbestuur by J. du P. Bothma (ed.). Second edition. Published by J.L. van Schaik, Pretoria. 602 pp. ISBN 0 627 01864 5. Price R199.50.

In many parts of Africa wildlife is a natural asset. Hunting of game was a way of life in many areas, particularly in South Africa. Irrational and irresponsible use of this natural resource reduced the game populations drastically towards the end of the 19th century. Certain mammalian species became extinct, while others were highly endangered. Increased awareness of the plight of game on the subcontinent and the importance of conservation resulted, indirectly, in the concept and practice of game farming. Professor J. du P. Bothma and his 26 co-workers saw the need to document the increasing 'know-how' which was either documented in diverse and scattered publications, or not documented at all. The authors are all well-known persons in the southern African scientific, conservation, and veterinary fraternities. The first edition of *Wildplaasbestuur* was published in 1986 and the English translation entitled *Game Ranch Management* followed in 1989. The excellent reception extended to the English version of this book prompted the second edition of *Wildplaasbestuur*. The English translation of this second edition will be available toward the middle of 1996.

The book is divided into eight major sections. Part 1 refers to **General Outlines** and is devoted to important ecological principles, the objects of game farming and also includes a chapter on the biomes, veldtypes and game farming areas of South Africa. Part 2 is devoted to **Game Farm Planning** and discusses factors to be considered when buying a game ranch, habitat evaluation, game fences (including electrified fencing), water provision, air strips, vehicles, buildings and camping facilities as well as holding pens and bomas.

Part 3, **Game**, includes discussions on species of game suitable for a game ranch, aspects of animal behaviour, the digestive tract in ruminants, mineral deficiencies, game and domestic stock in opposition, their respective productivity, and finally, the concepts of biological diversity, hybridization and inbreeding. **Management and utilization of Game** is debated in Part 4. It contains 11 chapters which cover aspects of the monitoring, culling and capturing of game, the care of game in captivity, and the transportation of game. It also addresses

components of hunting for venison, meat processing, the preparation of venison for export, trophy hunting and the correct way of preparing trophies.

Part 5 looks at the **Management and Utilization of Rare (and not so rare) Species of Game**. This includes the African elephant, the Cape buffalo, both the black and the white rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, as well as a chapter on the effective management of carnivores in general. This part is concluded by a chapter on ostriches, game birds and the hunting of the latter. Part 6 treats **Diseases and Parasites of Game**, emphasising virological, bacterial and protozoological infections, and other pathological and parasitological conditions encountered in game populations. Preventative disease management and post-mortem techniques are also presented. Part 7 is devoted to **Habitat Management**. Veld management, erosion control, and reclaiming of eroded areas are discussed. Part 8 consists of **Game Farming in Arid Areas**, a subject of particular importance to southern Africa. The abiotic and physical factors are treated in detail, as are features of nutrition, veld assessment, carrying capacity, mixed ranching with game and domesticated stock and the utilisation of game. Seven game species are listed and discussed in greater detail. These represent those game species with commercial potential in arid regions.

This is a big (602 pages) and important book.

Since the publication of the English edition, it has become an important source of references alluding to game species and game ranching in Africa. The text is written in a palatable style and the 159 figures and 48 tables are tastefully presented and easy to interpret. The information contained in this book provides the necessary background required by owners of game ranches, managers of game farms, students enrolled for a postgraduate degree in wildlife management, and professional personnel in organised agriculture. It will also serve the interest of the layman interested in nature conservation and nature in general.

G. de Graaff