Book reviews – Buchbesprechungen – Livres nouveaux

George B. Schaller: The Mountain Gorilla; Ecology and Behavior. University of Chicago Press, 1963. XVII+431 pp. Price: \$ 10.00.

The life history and behavior of the gorilla—the largest of the man-like apes and the last one to be discovered—remained very poorly known ever since the first relevant accounts by Du Chaillu in 1861. Even Bingham's expedition in 1929 for the sole purpose of studying gorillas in their native habitat had failed to produce many new results of real significance. It was left to the young American author of the book under review to succeed in collecting an astonishing mass of unique data on the daily life of the mountain gorilla during his two years of patient field work in the eastern Congo, where he proved that a fearless and unhurried observer can remain in close proximity to these shy, yet formidable apes. This exemplary, systematic report describes in great detail the behavior of the gorilla in daytime and even at night and from birth to death. There are well-documented accounts of the gorilla's habits of eating, playing, mating, nesting, sleeping, means of communication, expression of emotions, and reactions to other animals, including man. Even such intimate behavior as sneezing, yawning, burping and wind-breaking has been conscientiously recorded. Particularly significant are the many data on the composition and density of the population, on growth, postures, locomotion, injuries and mortality, etc. The twelve excellent, full-page photographs of gorillas in their natural, undisturbed environment are by far the best available so far and add greatly to the value of this outstanding contribution to primatology.

A few very minor criticisms may be mentioned for consideration in possible later editions. In the table on the weights of gorillas the maximum of 550 lbs. is given for "Gargantua", but this circus specimen, famous years ago, was actually quite small and, when sent to the reviewer upon its death, weighed only 312 lbs., even though it was still very fat. The exceptionally great weight, quoted for the much smaller female gorilla "M'toto" from the same circus, appears therefore as also far too high. The appended table of cranial measurements of the fine collection of 19 mountain gorillas is unfortunately of very limited help without an adequate explanation of the particular measuring technique employed, since such definitions as "palatal length from margin of palate to gnathion" can not be understood even by experts. A. H. Schultz, Zurich