

BOOK REVIEWS

The Rhinoceros of South Asia by Kees Rookmaaker

The three species of Asian rhinoceroses, until recent history, were all found in South Asia. Today only one species survives. In this remarkable book, Kees (who has long been a Bartlett Society member) has concerted his research to South Asia. This is far more than a zoological account of the lives and fate of these animals. Records are provided for all of the known rhinoceroses taken into captivity from the region, many of which, of course, were later shipped to royalty, the rich and famous, private estates and then zoos, menageries and circuses around the world. Details are provided on how these animals were caught, accustomed to captivity and transported.

I have only had the opportunity to read three (of the 68) chapters for this review but that is more than sufficient to be able to highly recommend it. With the hardcover edition price being 295 Euro, this may be beyond the resources of many, although the quality of the book, with its 885 pages, over 700 illustrations and 38 maps, and exhaustive research, makes this a tempting investment. Indeed, I can recommend obtaining this book if only for its choice illustrations. And, here is some good news, being an academic book means that it is also available to all on-line.

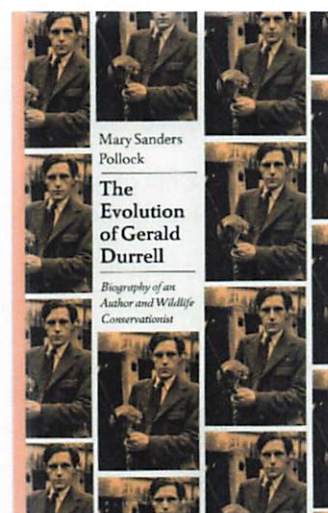
My brief foray into the book raised many thoughts. One was that many of the enclosures for captive Asian rhinoceroses kept in South Asia a century or so ago appeared to be superior to many for their counterparts in Europe and America today. Secondly, considering that the climate and availability of natural feed for the animals kept in South Asia should make successful captive welfare more productive, it was notable that far more Asian rhinos have been born in both Europe and America in the past three decades. Should more programmes be created for captive breeding of rhinos in South Asia, or are other risks, including poaching, too high?

John Adams

The Evolution of Gerald Durrell by Mary Sanders Pollock Subtitle: **Biography of an Author and Wildlife Conservationist**

Mary Sanders Pollock takes an interesting approach to her subject by examining his life through his books and those of his close family. It's partly a literary review that sets Durrell's storytelling in a wider historical context as it charts how Durrell's views develop and mature over his lifetime.

Durrell's books are grouped into subsets which form chapters covering his formative year in Corfu; his collecting trips to Africa and then South America; his fascination with island biogeography; and finally trips to Madagascar and the Mascarenes. His TV film career is neatly inter-twined into the latter chapters. Pollock charts his journey from wildlife "collector to protector". It's hard not to use the word "journey", as you feel you're travelling through time and places as the author leads you through "Durrell's story".



The author switches to writing in the first person when writing the final two chapters about his zoo in Jersey and an Afterword taking the opportunity to reflect upon Durrell's legacy. This book, published in 2024, is a scholarly piece of research with each chapter heavily referenced.

(Paperback, 196 pp)

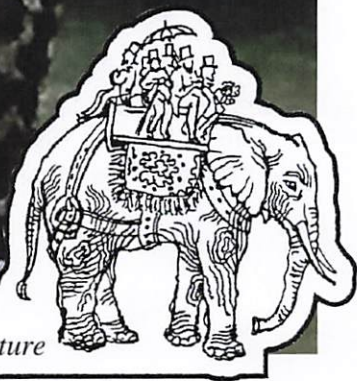
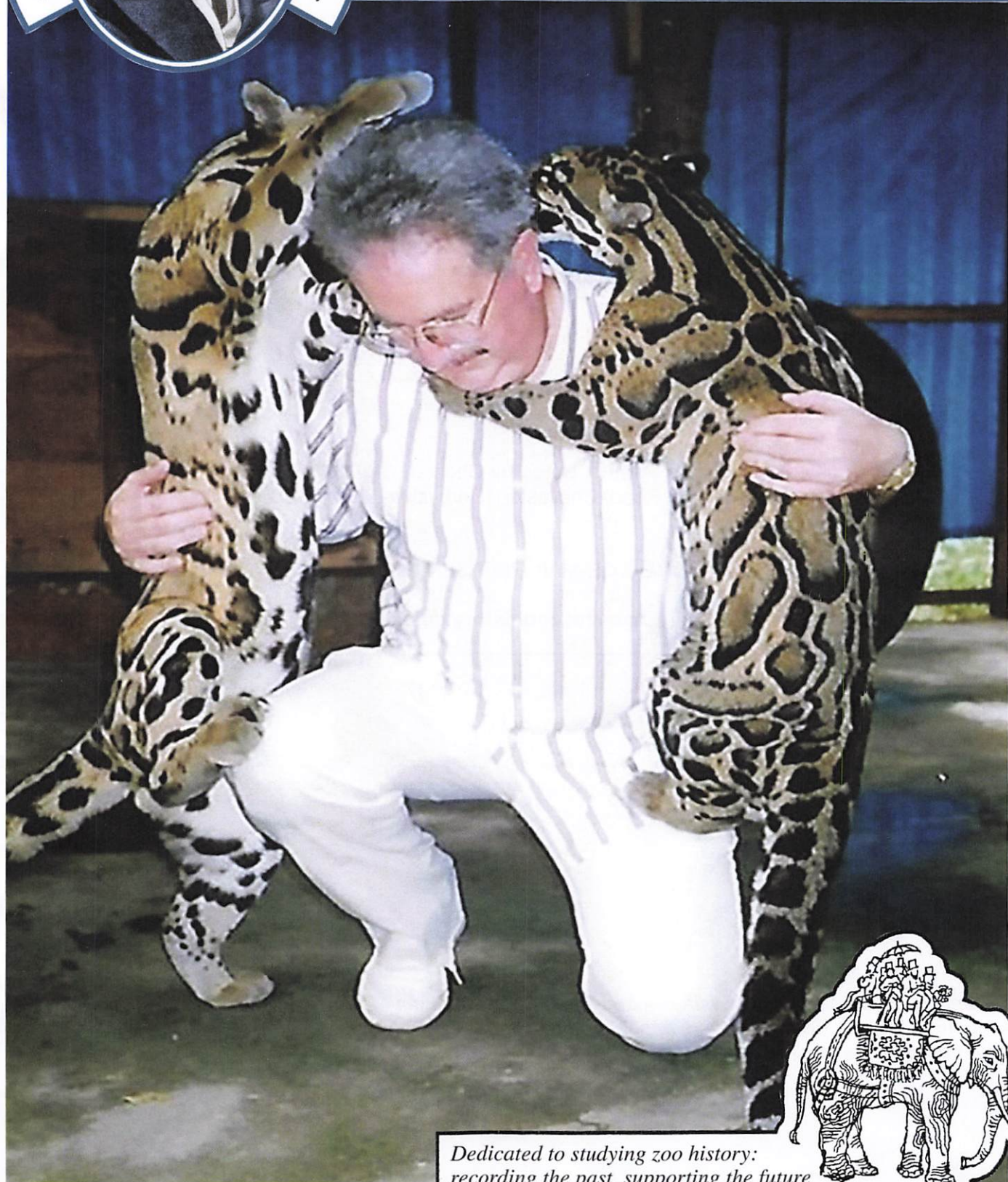
David Lomas



The Bartlett Society

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*Front cover: Bernard Sayers with clouded leopards at Jonathan Murray's private zoo in Bangkok. A tribute to the late Bernard Sayers appears on page 11.
Photo credit: Bernard Sayers.*