



Posing for the Press, about 1946

L to R: William Penny, Frisch, Rudolf Peierls, John Cockcroft

really assimilate enough information to help him with the biographical chapters which are the real meat of the book, and which seem quite intelligible on their own.

This is a happy book, from which the author's personality and his enjoyment of physics, of music, of life, emerges clearly. It is also a portrait of the pre-War world of physics, of the days of small numbers and

small apparatus, of times when a physicist could think of an ingenious experiment today and set it up tomorrow. □

Sir Rudolf Peierls was Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of Oxford until his retirement in 1974, and was previously Professor of Mathematical Physics at the University of Birmingham from 1937-63.

Gelada baboons

Ecological and Sociological Studies of Gelada Baboons. Edited by M. Kawai. Pp. 344. (S. Karger: Basel, Munchen, Paris and London, 1978). DM148; \$74.

In a variety of ways, gelada baboons are one of the most unprimate-like primates: they are almost exclusively terrestrial; they feed extensively on grass; and they aggregate in large herds of unstable membership. Consequently, they are a species which might be expected to shed extensive light on relationships between ecological variables and behaviour and on the functional significance of behavioural differences between primates and ungulates.

The volume recently edited by Kawai provides a broad description of the ranging behaviour, social organisation and feeding ecology of the species in the Gich area of the Simien National Park in Ethiopia, but does little to provide satisfactory explanations of the geladas' many surprising characteristics. Four observers habituated several herds and learnt to recognise all individuals in one of them. As a result, they were able to examine both detailed social relationships among individual members of the harem-groups which aggregate to form herds, and relationships between neighbouring herds.

Twelve chapters, by combinations of the

four authors, cover herd dynamics, inter-harem relationships, social behaviour within harems, the development of social behaviour and group structure, reproductive behaviour, communication, ranging behaviour and feeding ecology. Particularly in areas where it concentrates on answering questions rather than broad, quantitative description, the book reveals fascinating insights into the behaviour of the species: its description of herd stability, of grooming relationships within harems and of food intake in relation to abundance, provide novel coverage of important topics.

Sadly, the reader's interest is titillated more often than it is satisfied. Why do females periodically discipline their harem males by chasing them up cliffs? Why do harem masters tolerate the presence of extra males in their harems which, even if they are temporarily inhibited from breeding, are likely to contest their hegemony in future? And why do male geladas not control their females in as chauvinistic a fashion as male hamadryas baboons — which share a similar environment and social system? Attention to specific questions of this kind would have provided the book with a stronger connecting theme and reduced the extent to which it overlaps the previous volume on geladas in the same series.

T. H. Clutton-Brock

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