



## Books For Banders

"SOMETHING OLD AND SOMETHING NEW"

Edited By Mabel Gillespie

Konrad Lorenz, the leading student of animal behavior, has an impressive list of writings to his credit, but only a few have been translated from the German into English. These include the book called "King Solomon's Ring" which was surveyed in the last issue of EBBA News, and another called "Man Meets Dog" which was briefly mentioned.

Now we turn our attention to a book Lorenz copyrighted in German in 1963, which was published just a year ago by Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., translated into English by Marjorie Kerr Wilson under the title "On Aggression".

Lorenz has not only observed assorted species of animal life closely for many years, but has read widely; and frequently he correlates his observations and conclusions with those of other behaviorists. He includes a provocative bibliography which is frustrating as well, since many of the books and articles included are written in German.

Lorenz claims that behavioral science knows so much about the natural history of aggression, which is intra-specific and not inter-specific in animals, is controlled by inhibitions which have kept any species from annihilating itself; but that in the human race such controls have become lacking; and he presents the reasons for this. The author concludes with his hope for and belief in the future of mankind through the attainment of knowledge, the development of humor, and selectivity in the future trends of evolution. In the large sense this is a book of constructive philosophy based upon proven facts; a directive toward a future for mankind without decimating wars and conflicts.

No one would deny the importance of such a thesis in this day of hydrogen bombs and race hatreds. But the question inevitably arises: why is the book suggested as good medicine for banders?

The answer is the same one which seemed to justify the inclusion of the three books already considered this year: "African Genesis" and "Territorial Imperative" by Robert Ardrey, and "King Solomon's Ring". Ardrey, as an enthusiastic reporter, gives his readers a large measure of animal behavior studies by way of proving his thesis. Lorenz is a leader in the field of animal behavior, and cites example after example of fascinating behavior observations toward the end of building up proof for his conclusions.

In the first two chapters of "On Aggression" the author describes the actions of fish on the coral reefs off Key Largo, Florida, and in his laboratory aquaria. Chapter Three reaches the conclusion that aggression is "an essential part of the life-preserving organization of instincts" which can and sometimes does function in the wrong way. By way of arriving at this conclusion there are cited in detail a number of behavior studies, including several of avian species.

From here on through Chapter Eleven, the author approaches his final conclusions, step by step, by citing all sorts of fascinating observations of animal behavior. Since his special studies are based on observations of birds and fish, the bander will find plenty of avian interest. Not only are these details fascinating in and of themselves, but they provide a graphic lesson in interpreting behavioral sequences.

As banders we have unique opportunities for adding to the data on avian behavior, and often we might make more significant contributions to ornithological science by spending less time in tagging birds and more time in observing them.

Behavior studies demand a strict discipline in interpretation. One must combat the inclination to leap to anthropomorphic conclusions. On the other hand, Lorenz is refreshingly willing to allow controlled anthropomorphising. For, as he points out, behavior development has evolved through countless millennia, and there are similarities in all the higher animals, including man. This, he explains, is why visits to the zoo enchant us. When we laugh at animal behavior, we are really laughing at the traits which often we ourselves possess.

In Chapter Five, "Habit, Ritual and Magic", there is an illuminating description of certain types of behavior among several species of ducks. "A good example of how a rite originates...how it acquires a meaning, and how it becomes altered in the course of further development, can be found by studying a certain ceremony of females of the duck species. This ceremony is called 'inciting' ". Several pages further the author writes, "While the message of inciting in Ruddy Shelduck and Egyptian Geese could be expressed in the words 'Drive him off, thrash him!', in diving ducks it simply means 'I love you.' In several groups an intermediate meaning may be found: 'You are my hero. I rely on you!'"

If you have read "King Solomon's Ring" you know how intimately Lorenz has lived with Greylag Geese, "imprinting" himself upon chicks as a parent and occasionally taking one of the species into his home as a sort of family member. For the most part he has kept a flock nearby in as natural a state as possible, and has observed them closely and understandingly. Through several chapters in "On Aggression" he describes details of their habits, methods of communication, mating rituals, etc. This not only makes fascinating reading, but serves as a model for serious and detailed studies of behavior.

Several pages are devoted to accounts of experiments with brood-tending turkeys. It has been proven that a female turkey recognizes her young by voice only, and not by sight. A deaf turkey, which had incubated normally, pecked all her chicks to death as soon as they hatched. "Only the sound expression of the cheeping chick elicits innate maternal behavior and puts aggression under inhibition."

In discussing the tendency of many species, including some of birds, to flock, the authors claims that "many, perhaps all predators which pursue a single prey are incapable of concentrating on one target if, at the same time, many others are crossing their field of vision."

Night Herons are the main actors in a chapter called "Social Organization without Love". After reading it I realized what types of behavior I should look for next time I try to band young night herons.

A very important chapter is "The Bond". Here we encounter the theory of the "redirected activity". The author speaks of "the ingenious feat of transforming, by the comparatively simple means of redirection and ritualization, a behavior pattern which...is partly motivated by aggression, into a means of appeasement and further into a love ceremony which forms a strong tie between those that participate in it. This means neither more nor less than converting the mutually repelling effect of aggression into its opposite...Thus it forms a bond between individuals."

To substantiate this theory the author describes fascinating behavior patterns among various species of birds, and particularly the "triumph ceremony" of true geese. "The whole ceremony has a similar effect on the behavior of individuals participating in it. It holds them together and enables them to stand by each other against a hostile world. The principle of the bond formed by having something in common which has to be defended against outsiders remains the same, from cichlids defending a common territory or brood, right up to scientists defending a common opinion and - most dangerous of all - fanatics defending a common ideology."

"The similarities in the social behavior patterns of the Greylag Goose and in man are not derived from a common ancestor but have arisen by so-called divergent adaptation".

The single-track minded bander can close the book at the end of this chapter and omit the last three. But I think many banders will temporarily switch from their banding track and read to the end. Lorenz hopes that a realization and acceptance of the animal origins of human aggression may divert the human race from destructive wars. He says: "I am honestly convinced that in the near future very many men - indeed the majority of mankind - will regard as obvious and banal truth all that I have written in this book about intraspecific aggression and the dangers which its perversions entail for humanity." I would urge even the single-trackers to read at least the final paragraph which is at once a benediction and a ray of hope.