

REVIEW

ORNAMENTAL WATERFOWL. A Guide to their Care and Breeding. By LT.-COL. A. A. JOHNSON and W. H. PAYN. 96 pages; coloured frontispiece by Roland Green; 12 photographic plates. (*Witherby*, London, 1957). 21s.

INTENDED to provide detailed practical information for keepers, and would-be keepers, of waterfowl, this small book fulfils its aims admirably. A work of this kind was badly needed, for many improvements in technique have been achieved by the growing band of enthusiasts in the fifty years since the appearance of Miss Rose Hubbard's similarly-titled book.

The authors have concentrated on the needs of people with limited space and show how inexpensive equipment, requiring little skill to construct and maintain, can provide healthy living and breeding conditions for most types of waterfowl. It might have been useful to have given some indication of the price of hand-reared birds. For example, ten species of ducks are listed as "more attractive and less expensive" and "particularly suitable for beginners". Current prices for these species range from six to twelve pounds a pair, so that a collection of one pair of each would probably cost about eighty pounds. Geese, with a very few exceptions, are more expensive. Of course, once a collection is successfully established, it may be possible to recoup most of the outlay on the initial stock by the sale or exchange of surplus young birds reared.

Another source of expense for which estimates would be instructive is the purchase of grain and, particularly, of the proprietary poultry or game-bird foods which are, rightly, recommended for breeding birds and ducklings. It may easily cost three pounds to raise a duckling to maturity.

Perhaps the weakest chapter in the book is that devoted to diseases. This is by no means wholly the authors' fault since, despite recent important advances in chemotherapy, all too often symptoms appear too late for effective medication, or no treatment has yet been found reliable. But several comparatively frequently found troubles are not mentioned (e.g. aspergillosis, gape-worms, nephritis and *Acuaria*-infection) and it would have been better to mention some places and people competent to carry out post-mortems and advise on preventive measures. Veterinary Investigation Centres of the Ministry of Agriculture provide a valuable service in this field.

These are small criticisms. If you must keep waterfowl, this is a book you ought to have. H.B.