

Reviews

British Garden Birds. Video-cassette presented by David Attenborough. BBC Enterprises Ltd, 1981. Duration 72 minutes.

The idea of having a simple identification guide to British garden birds which can be viewed at home on the television screen (by those fortunate enough also to have a video recorder) is excellent, and so too is this particular tape. The commentary, by David Attenborough, covers not only identification, but also general information about the species being shown. The sequence is 'field guide order', so that related species follow each other. The selection is comprehensive and in the 70 minutes the viewer sees and hears about all the species which are likely to be seen in an English garden (although some, such as Mute Swan, Hobby, Wryneck, Nightingale and Crossbill, are likely to occur in only a few!).

It seems almost unfair to introduce words of adverse criticism, but it seemed strange that Willow Tit should not even be mentioned when Marsh Tit is one of the featured species; and also odd that, despite the inclusion of Whitethroat, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff, there is no mention of Garden Warbler, when its name alone should have guaranteed its inclusion on this particular tape. The colour quality of the review tape was disappointing, but I suspect that this was the result of excessive use and that a newly purchased copy would be of the BBC's usual high standard.

The value of this video tape lies not only in its use for audiences of small clubs, but also for home use by people who are not yet thoroughly familiar with the common birds of the English countryside. (Perhaps, in a few years' time, we shall have videotapes of those obscure Asiatic warblers and buntings . . .)

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Atlas Provisional de los Vertebrados Terrestres de Galicia Años 1970-1979. Parte II. Aves nidificantes. Edited by Z. Lopez Beiras and J. Guitán Rivera. Santiago de Compostela, 1980 (Monograph No. 74 of the University of Santiago de Compostela). 176 pages; 150 maps. Paperback, 1,200 ptas.

This atlas gives provisional breeding distribution maps for 148 bird species in Galicia, the northwest region of Spain, based on some 5,300 records covering 257 10-km squares of the UTM grid, a little under three-quarters of the area. About half the records, and half the area cover, came from published and unpublished studies in 1970-78, and the rest from fieldwork in 1979 by a few individuals using the methods of the BTO/IWC atlas. Both atlas and fieldwork were in preparation for a project to map the terrestrial vertebrates of Galicia during 1980-85. Maps, usually two to a page, use the familiar three dot sizes for possible, probable and confirmed breeding, and are faced by a brief commentary summarising distribution and giving status as very common, common, less common, rare, or very rare. The last two have 29 species each, and six and 20 respectively are considered endangered—unlikely to survive more than a few years without urgent protection. A further 20 species are mentioned, which formerly bred; or whose claims are doubtful; or which breed elsewhere in Iberia and are common on migration.

By its nature far from complete, this atlas nevertheless shows that, even with few observers to cover a diverse area 50% bigger than Wales, much of interest can be learned. It should have served well its purpose of guiding the main survey, which will in turn help Spanish ornithologists with their share of the forthcoming European breeding bird atlas project during 1985-88.

S. M. TAYLOR

Les Oiseaux de la Corse: histoire et répartition aux XIXe et XXe Siècles. By Jean-Claude Thibault. Parc Naturel Regional de la Corse, Ajaccio. (Available from Redwing Books, 90a Sandgate Road, Folkestone CT20 2BE.) 255 pages; 64 black-and-white plates; 2 line-drawings. Paperback, £12.00.

This most useful book on the birds of Corsica gives descriptions of the status (both past and present), migration dates, summer and winter distributions, and habitats of all the species that

have been claimed to occur there. The systematic list is preceded by six introductory chapters which deal respectively with the geography, the habitats and their avifauna, the characteristics of the avifauna, the migrations, the history of ornithology, and bird collections. Finally, there is an extensive reference list, as well as the usual indexes.

My main criticism is of the maps, which are small, incomplete and cramped amongst the text. Each of those showing relief, vegetation, towns and regions should occupy a whole page. Nevertheless, I recommend the book, especially to those with a knowledge of French.

SIMON ALBRECHT