

Short reviews

Birds. By **Althea**. (Life-cycle Books series, Longman, Harlow, 1980. 24 pages; 13 colour illustrations. £1.75.) Suitable for parents to read to their three- to six-year-old children.

The Scottish Ospreys: from extinction to survival. By **Philip Brown**. (Heinemann, London, 1979. 190 pages; 18 colour plates; 38 black-and-white plates; 4 line-drawings. £7.50.) The story of the extirpation of Ospreys from Scotland and then, as Dr George Waterston describes it in his foreword, 'the cloak and dagger' days 50 years later, when the RSPB was fighting the natural and human dangers facing the newly colourising Ospreys. Events since the 1950s are summarised by a table.

Birdwatcher at Large. By **Bruce Campbell, with drawings by Donald Watson**. (Dent, London, Toronto & Melbourne, 1979. 272 pages; 21 line-drawings. £7.95.) Autobiography of the BTO's first secretary, who nowadays is perhaps best known as nature-journalist and broadcaster. His birds'-nesting (directed, when at school, towards his egg-collection, but subsequently towards data collection and ringing) has remained the dominant interest throughout his life and led to that classic book *Finding Nests* (1953) and its successor *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests* (1972), written jointly with James Ferguson-Lees. This book reflects his life's interest.

A Garland of Nightingales. By **Hockley Clarke**. (Gordon & Cremonesi, London & New York, 1979. 120 pages; 8 illustrations. £8.50.) Companion book to this author's *Blackie & Co.* (1978, see review *Brit. Birds* 72: 127). Decorative garlands, clouds and singing birds border every page; the large-type brief text consists mainly of poetry and purple prose; expensive.

The Nesting Season: the bird photographs of Frederick Kent Truslow. Commentary by **Helen G. Cruickshank**. (Elm Tree Books, London, 1979. 136 pages; many black-and-white and colour photographs. £15.00.) This book is really a vehicle for the photographs, many of which (especially those in colour) are superb, and the colour-reproduction, although somewhat variable, is usually also excellent. The cost is, however, high: if

bought for the colour photographs, the purchaser will be paying exactly 20p per picture.

A Hebridean Naturalist. By **Peter Cunningham**. (Acair, Stornoway, 1979. 71 pages; seven black-and-white illustrations. Paperback £2.95.) Mostly about birds; enjoyment of birdwatching in the Western Isles, written with enthusiasm and flair for 'Nature notes' in the *Stornoway Gazette* and now reprinted as an attractive booklet.

Wildlife of Scotland. Edited by **Fred Holliday**. (Macmillan, London, 1979. 198 pages; 115 colour plates; many black-and-white plates; some line-drawings. £8.95.) A beautifully produced, well-designed book, with some of the best photographic reproduction of any recent publication. With ten authors of the calibre of Dr David Jenkins and Dr Adam Watson, the texts are far more than the usual regurgitated generalisations which the book's title might suggest initially. Publication was aided by the Gulf Oil Corporation on behalf of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, and both bodies deserve commendation. Any naturalist with the slightest interest in the animals and plants of Scotland will want to own this book.

Border Reflections—chiefly on the arts of shooting and fishing. By **Lord Home**. (Collins, London, 1979. 111 pages; several black-and-white illustrations. £4.95.) Entertaining light reading for anyone whose countryside interests are those noted in the book's subtitle.

Eric Hosking's Birds: fifty years of photographing wildlife. By **Eric Hosking with Kevin MacDonnell**. (Pelham, London, 1979. 224 pages; 80 colour plates; over 200 black-and-white plates. £10.50.) Is there any bird-photographer—whether professional or budding—who would not wish to own this handsome volume of The Master's work? The text not only describes the circumstances in which many of the photographs were obtained, but is also full of useful tips. Recommended.

Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida: volume 2, Birds. Edited by **Herbert W. Kale II**. (University Presses of Florida, Gainesville, 1979. 121 pages; 36 black-and-white photo-

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graphs; 70 maps. Paperback, \$7.00). Red Data Books, started by the IUCN on a world basis, now multiply for smaller areas. This is an excellent example, though it extends beyond endangered and threatened species to those which are rare or of special concern in Florida. For 72 species, there are sections on range, habitat, life history and ecology, status and recommendations, with references, maps and photographs. Florida is deservedly popular with birdwatchers, and the British visitor will find this a useful guide to the rarer species: a mouth-watering list, which ranges from Wood Stork, Everglade Kite and Ivory-billed Woodpecker to Sandhill Crane, White-tailed Kite and Limpkin. It is to be hoped that its many sensible recommendations will be heeded in time. [SC] **Ornamental Waterfowl. By Hartmut Kolbe.** (Gresham Books, Old Woking, 1979. 258 pages; 86 colour plates; 42 black-and-white plates; over 100 distribution maps. £8.50). The odd mixture of birds in this book includes Little Egret, Moorhen, Crane, Oystercatcher and Black-headed Gull, as well as the expected swans, geese and ducks. Identification is dealt with minimally (and often badly); the photographs vary from excellent to very poor, some being not only apparently out of focus and reproduced with the wrong colour-tones, but also marked-up in such a way that the birds appear to be either swimming uphill or sliding down a ski-slope. **Lambert's Birds of Shore and Estuary. Paintings by Terence Lambert; text by Alan Mitchell.** (Collins, London, 1979. 127 pages; many colour illustrations and some black-and-white line-drawings. £6.95). Full-page painted colour portraits of some 50 common British species, with a few lines of text about each on the facing page. Alan Mitchell's brief word-portraits are entirely appropriate in the circumstances. Doubtless many bird-lovers will wish to buy this attractive-looking volume. For a coffee-table book—which is how it must be classed—it is relatively cheap, although also slim. The paintings are mostly (but not wholly) accurate, though somewhat wooden, in this respect often recalling the work of Raymond Ching by resembling the frozen motion of a photograph, rather than the actual motion of a moving creature. **The Seeing Eye: notes of a Highland naturalist. By John Lister-Kaye.** (Allen Lane, London, 1980. 275 pages; 29 black-and-white plates; several line-drawings. £7.95). Autobiographical account of the setting up of a nature study centre in the Scottish Highlands; exceedingly

well and interestingly written; excellent light reading. **Parrots: their care and breeding. By Rosemary Low.** (Blandford Press, Poole, 1980. 654 pages; 91 colour plates; 25 black-and-white plates. £22.00). Although the first one-fifth covers aspects of the aviculture of parrots, this book is devoted largely to species-by-species accounts of parrots of the world, usually under the headings 'range/habitat', 'description' and 'aviculture'. The colour-photographs are superb (as they should be, since captive birds are depicted), but cover less than one-third of the species. **Nature in the West Country. By S. A. Manning.** (World's Work Ltd, The Windmill Press, Tadworth, 1979. 160 pages; many black-and-white plates. Hardback £6.95, paperback £4.95). Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, competently described and illustrated by well reproduced photographs. Chapters on mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles, butterflies, trees and shrubs and other plants vary from good to adequate, but the first two dozen pages—a compendium of interesting places in the three counties—are the most valuable. This book will be especially useful to visitors to southwestern England, particularly foreign tourists; local ornithologists will find little in it that they do not know already. **Das Rotkehlchen. By Rudolf Pätzold.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1979. 96 pages; 41 black-and-white photographs; 20 line-drawings. Paperback DM9.20). The Neue Brehm-Bücherei series continues apace—reaching number 520, which deals with the popular Robin, and, like its predecessors, covers the literature fully, with some original studies on nesting and the growth of young. [SC]. **Der Schwarzhalsstaucher. By Roland Prinzinger.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1979. 128 pages; 20 black-and-white plates; 37 line-drawings; 3 maps. Paperback DM13.40). Another monograph in an excellent series, this one covering the Black-necked Grebe. Text entirely in German. **British Birds: a field guide. By Alan J. Richards.** (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1979. 192 pages; many colour photographs and black-and-white line-drawings. £4.95). Yet another in the flood of books cashing in on the birdwatching boom. Although purporting to deal with 'all the species you are likely to see in Britain over the course of a year', Green Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper are, for instance, each dismissed in only 30 words. Such limitations apart, the book is a success: most of Britain's

commonest birds are excellently illustrated by well-chosen colour photographs and a series of attractive black-and-white drawings by R. A. Hume. The book is clearly aimed at the absolute novice, who will find much of use and interest, despite its incompleteness. With comprehensive coverage, this could have been a really useful book: the publishers ought to be kicking themselves for missing this opportunity. **A Natural History of Britain and Ireland.** By Eric Simms, illustrated by Robert Gillmor. (Dent, London, Melbourne & Toronto, 1979, 258 pages; 15 line-drawings. £6.95.) This admirable book provides fascinating reading for everyone interested in the natural history of our islands. The title, however, is inappropriate, since this is very much a personal account, as the dust-jacket blurb says, of 'the differing landscapes of the British Isles through the eyes of one naturalist who has travelled widely and observantly through them'. Robert Gillmor's evocative vignettes head each of the 15 chapters, which are crammed with facts and reminiscences. The index is good, but this is a book for pleasure, rather than a work of reference. **How About Birdwatching?** By Val Singleton and Arthur Gilpin. (EP Publishing Ltd, Wakefield, 1979. 96 pages; 40 black-and-white plates; several line-drawings. Paperback £1.50.) The beginner gets sound advice presented in an interesting way by Val Singleton, but almost half of this small book is wasted on a badly designed and completely inadequate 'Fieldguide to the birds a beginner is most likely to encounter'. A complicated system of tiny symbols and a poor choice of typography lead to confusion and the texts are generally too brief or misleading or with the wrong emphasis, which is a pity, since the first one-third of the book provides valuable guidance for the novice. **Nordjyllands Fugle: deres yngleudbredelse og trækforhold.** By Poul Erik Sperling, Uffe Gjøel Sørensen and Anders Pape Møller. (Scandinavian Science Press Ltd, Klampenborg, 1978. 372 pages, 8 black-and-white plates, numerous maps, histograms and line-drawings. DKr140 plus postage.) The birdlife of Salling, Mors, Thy, Hanherred, Vendsyssel and Himmerland: the northernmost tip of Jutland. Geology and landscape forms, hydrographical and marine-ecological conditions, the many islands, the different habitats, climate, migration routes over south Scandinavia, human activity and its effect on birdlife, and the history of

ornithology in North Jutland are covered in some detail. The systematic list, the main part of the book, deals with status, breeding range, migration, summer, winter, and changes in status going back to the 19th century; where relevant, topics such as taxonomy are included. The bibliography fills 20 pages. Sturdy, and excellently set out and produced; even non-Danish speakers will find the maps and histograms valuable for reference; a model. [DAVID A. CHRISTIE] **Wings over Wales.** By Gerald Summers. (Collins, London, 1979. 207 pages; several line-drawings. £6.50.) The author's personal experiences with 'Random', his Golden Eagle, 'Torquil', his Imperial Eagle, and various other captive raptors. **A Century of Bird Books.** By Peter Tate. (Witherby, London, 1979. 256 pages; 93 black-and-white plates. £10.50.) After selecting certain bird books and eminent ornithologists for special treatment in the first two-thirds, there are ten bibliographies under subject headings, listing the bird books published in Britain during the last 100 years. This was a gap in the ornithological literature and a book on this topic could have been very useful for reference. Unfortunately, the two parts of this book are not cross-referenced and there is no means of finding the detailed treatment of a book (nor of determining whether such a detailed treatment exists), without prolonged search. **Arctic Summer: birds in North Norway.** By Richard Vaughan. (Anthony Nelson, Shrewsbury, 1979. 152 pages; 7 colour plates; many black-and-white plates. £6.25.) If you like travelogues of bird expeditions, this is for you. The tale of a trip to the Varanger Peninsula in June-July 1972, profusely illustrated with the author's photographs, those in colour being especially good. The text—secondary to the photographic plates—is unjustified and has a wide left hand margin. **The Complete Birds of the World.** By Michael Walters. (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1980. 340 pages. £12.50.) Following the sequence of J. L. Peters's *Check List of the Birds of the World*, with subsequent revisions; scientific name, authority, an English vernacular name, distribution, habitat, food, nest-site, clutch-size, incubation details and fledging period are listed for every species of bird in the world. A helpful and well laid-out volume, but users should note that the English vernacular names—even those of some common European species—are not always those which are in general use in Britain.