

but too much has been asked of him when only two of the contributors have English as their mother tongue. Despite this, for the well-informed reader prepared to put in time and effort, there is much that is useful and fascinating on history, anthropology, geology, climate, lichens, fungi, native and introduced higher plants, reptiles and amphibians, beetles and birds – unfortunately the chapter on birds is in Spanish, but the lists and tables in it are very helpful.

In summary, this book gives a rather incomplete and patchy account of the islands' flora, fauna and people. At its rather frightening price (over 7p per printed page) few outside specialist libraries will be able to afford it. For the scientist working in the islands, it will of course be an essential reference book.

S. R. J. WOODSELL

Flora Europaea Vol. 4, edited by T. G. Tutin and others.* Cambridge University Press, £25.

Volume IV of *Flora Europaea* is the largest yet, over 500 pages at nearly 5p a page, and it continues the high standard set by its predecessors. The bulk of this volume is taken up by the enormous family *Compositae*, containing such terrifying genera as *Centaurea*, with 221 species recognised in Europe, and *Hieracium* with 260. Of course with a genus like *Hieracium* the actual number is a matter of personal taste, and it is nice to see that the authors of *Taraxacum* have reduced the genus to 30 main species, each with a constellation of 20 or more associated species which most of us can reasonably ignore. Nomenclatural changes are refreshingly few, though *Gnaphalium* and *Filago* have been split up into some rather unpleasant sounding new genera, and *Pilosella*, which most of us had got used to separating from *Hieracium*, has been sunk again at the behest of the editors.

There is no doubt that when in 1978 Volume V, the final volume of *Flora Europaea* appears, it will be a major biological event. To have a standard work on an area as large and diverse as Europe will be of incomparable value to all field biologists. All who have already bought the first three volumes will want Volume IV, although in view of the way prices have increased since the first volume in 1964 – Vol 2 in 1968 cost seven guineas – they may look forward to Volume V with some trepidation.

A. H. FITTER

* The other editors are V. H. Heywood, N. A. Burges, D. M. Moore, D. H. Valentine, S. M. Walters, and D. A. Webb.

Pathway to the Wild, by William Condry. Faber and Faber, £5.50.
Birds of the Air, by Eric Simms. Hutchinson, £4.50.

I found as much pleasure in getting to know the author of *Pathway to the Wild* as in the subject matter. William Condry is a champion of wild places wherever they be, a critic of the inadequate protection afforded to land designated 'national park', and an enemy of exploiters, developers and big business setting their sights on the world's dwindling wilderness areas. He tells us that he was paid the compliment of having aroused the wrath of Rio Tinto Zinc after writing in *The Guardian* of their proposals for open-cast mining and other horrors in the Snowdonia National Park. Yet we may be sure his comments were temperate, accurate and timely. On the other hand he is not indifferent to people, and as the warden of the RSPB bird reserve of Ynys-hir in mid-Wales, he speculates on whether such reserves may not in the long run prove more beneficial to the human visitors than the wild inmates: which seems to push the argument too far after reading of so many pressures on the countryside from so many quarters.

Three chapters describe short visits paid to the Burren in Co. Clare, the Swiss National Park and the Arusha National Park in Tanzania, where he and his wife stayed several months. Other more discursive chapters, which suffer from compres-