

themselves in birds the author detects two streams, the artistic and the scientific, giving a chapter to each, and a further one to "The Naming of the Birds." These are equally informative but overbalance the book with people. If they are to have so much space one could have wished that some of the later writers could have been identified with their famous books which are probably unknown to the post-war generations. Does not Warde Fowler, for example, totally languish today although his account of finding the marsh warbler breeding in England is as good today as when he first wrote it? And Abel Chapman in "The Borders and Beyond" conjures up the Northumbrian mudflats as well as anyone has or will. Another, but more important, criticism is the absence of an index other than of birds.

The line illustrations are mostly from Bewick or Yarrell or of some of the author's bird heroes and in addition there are eight maps which are a little small for comfortable inspection of the detail. The coloured plates all seem to have appeared before in Shell advertisements. By modern artists, they are well worth preserving in book-form. At 25 shillings it is remarkably good value.

G. DES FORGES

### **Two in the Bush**, by **Gerald Durrell**. Collins, 25s.

This is Gerald Durrell's tenth book, quite apart from four more designed for children. The pattern is now well known—good stuff about animals, a lot of information, excellent thumbnail sketches of people and places, very funny episodes, and a first-class general description of some enviable experiences. "Two in a Bush" describes a filming trip mainly in Australia and New Zealand, partly in Malaya. As before, natural history is to the forefront. To those of us brought up on placental mammals, on birds which fly, on reptiles with just two eyes, on fossils which stay dead, and on the belief that penguins live in Antarctica, the creatures of the Antipodes are doubly strange. They are the exceptions to every rule, and Mr. Durrell makes the most of their antics, their habitats, their very existence. He also makes the most of local humanity, with everyone tending to be a character, with every form of existence being odd.

Every now and then his writing becomes excessive—"an enormous brass bell let out an ear-splitting clanging, like the distraught cries of a fire engine thwarted in love." Or, again on loudness, "our feet were making as much noise in the sphagnum moss as an exceptionally large troupe of hippopotami suffering from in-growing toenails walking through a huge cauldron of extremely thick porridge."

Plainly he relishes excitement, exceptional circumstances and near mishaps; but his customary style is at least to look askance at them, often to moan about them. A particular geyser, geologically timed to fire every ten years, chances to go off when he is strolling past it and the camera is running. He complains—or at least he makes out that he complained. So too with being winched up a cliff face, with wading to the shore from a float-plane, with flying in small aircraft among large mountains. Complaints apart, his books are always full of zest, of fascination, of enthusiasm for the quirks of nature, and this one is no exception. It is abetted in this instance by the fact that the wildlife of Australia and New Zealand is far quirkier than most, and Mr. Durrell misses no trick in saying so.

ANTHONY SMITH