

**West African Butterflies and Moths**, by John Boorman. Longmans, £4.00.

**Butterflies of New Zealand** by W. B. R. Laidlaw. Collins, £1.40.

**Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago**, by Malcolm Barcant. Collins, £2.75.

A rather mixed batch, but all quite useful. Boorman's coverage of the West African butterflies and moths in eighty pages is rather a remarkable achievement, due to his careful selection of the 225 species figured: most of those that get into a beginner's net are illustrated, but a few rarities are thrown in to whet the collector's appetite. The colour work is good, if a little dark. The black and white is quite adequate where the insect shown has a definite pattern of markings – solid black is not very helpful – but it is a great pity that there is no means of identifying the truly admirable line drawings of caterpillars and pupae interspersed amongst the photographs.

New Zealand, with only ten endemic butterflies and seven introduced species, is a different proposition; the author's artistic enlarged paintings occupy 16 of the 48 pages. The text is mostly concerned with generalities, including an invitation to relate insect migrations to sunspot cycles, the butterflies being summarily dealt with in the last four-and-a-half pages.

Malcolm Barcant has overcome the difficulty of handling 617 species in a more or less standard Collins Field Guide, by virtually ignoring all but 14 of the 230 species of Hesperidae known from the islands. Of the others, 336 are illustrated, mostly in colour. The arrangement is peculiar, strongly reflecting the author's far greater interest in butterflies as living creatures than as dead cabinet specimens neatly and systematically arranged. There is no systematic account; the butterflies are dealt with under such headings as those of the garden, of sunshine and flowers, of the shade, drinkers, migrants, highflyers, rarities, etc. Identification rests almost entirely on the figures. There are checklists of scientific and popular names, but no index. A pity the book is so difficult to use for it contains a great deal of interest.

NORMAN RILEY

**The Snakes of Europe**, by J. W. Steward. David & Charles, £2.75.

**British Snakes**, by Leonard G. Appleby. John Baker, £2.75.

Although a surprising number of books on reptiles have appeared in recent years, the publication of these two, both in 1971, is a noteworthy event for British herpetologists. J. W. Steward provides a most useful survey of his field, the first comprehensive account written for many years. Introductory chapters deal with the evolution and physical organisation of snakes, and with the effects of geology and climate on the distribution of the European forms, and there are interesting discussions, in fairly non-technical language, of methods of killing prey and the role of the various sense organs in such activities as courtship and hunting. The greater part of the book consists of a systematic review of the 33 species and various subspecies, with particulars of distribution, habits and appearance, illustrated by photos and drawings. There is an identification key and a series of diagrams showing head scalation, also a list of common names in the main European languages and a bibliography. This book will be a welcome addition to the libraries of both the specialist and the general naturalist.

L. G. Appleby's account of the British species (grass snake, smooth snake and adder) also contains a general introductory account of