

Book reviews

rather stilted, limited and disjointed, but it is followed by a further surprise in the form of a chapter on the social and cultural setting for conservation in Arabia. It is crucial to comprehend the Islamic perspective, for 'the role of the foreign conservationist in Arabia is essentially that of a short-term guest, contributing experience from elsewhere towards a uniquely Arabian and Muslim enterprise.' Maybe more Western conservationists should attempt to understand fully the local cultural norms before implanting their ideas elsewhere in the world.

This book is attractively produced and thoroughly readable. The colour photographs are an additional bonus, but surely someone must have good shots in the wild of the three species whose photographs were taken in captivity?

John Barkham, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, England.

The Birds of Africa. Volume III

C. Hilary Fry, Stuart Keith and Emil K. Urban

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Ltd. 1988, 611 pp., £71.50.

This is the third of seven volumes of this monumental work on African birds, the first volume of which was reviewed in the July 1983 issue of *Oryx*. Meanwhile one of the primary protagonists, Leslie Brown, died before Volume II was completed and it is sad that this remarkable ornithologist did not live to see the completion of what he regarded as the culmination of his life's work in Africa. The new editors have done a fine job in maintaining the high level of production that Leslie sought and the present volume, which covers the families from parrots to woodpeckers, is authoritative. The illustrations by Martin Woodcock and Ian Willis are excellent, though some of the plates appear cramped.

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This is hardly a field guide and the extension of the series from four to seven volumes will push the price and weight beyond the pockets and carrying capacity of most ornithologists. Nevertheless, anyone with an interest in African birds should seek a mortgage and a forklift truck instantly.

An Introduction to Animal Law Margaret E. Cooper

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Ltd, London, 1988, 213 pp., HB £17.50.

Animal law is a much broader topic than might at first be apparent, and one of the difficulties facing an author on the subject is either to be comprehensive and write an amazingly long book or be selective and risk being criticized for omitting important chunks of the law. Margaret Cooper acknowledges this dilemma in the introduction to her book and has, understandably, chosen the route of being selective and relatively brief.

The result is a book that will be useful to vets who need to know the procedures, for example, required by the law regarding scientific experiments on live animals and to lawyers who are asked to advise on liability when their client's dog bites the next door neighbour's child. However, the book's coverage of conservation law is very sparse, and to a biased conservationist like myself this is disappointing.

The book is primarily concerned with UK law, although there is a short section containing a few introductory sentences to animal law in some other countries. It covers questions of rights and responsibilities over animals—e.g. who owns an animal and who is responsible when it trespasses on to someone else's land. It also covers the law relating to the welfare of both wild and domestic animals, the use of animals for scientific purposes, the control of animal diseases and the treatment of animals

by vets. There is a rather curious chapter on health and safety law which has rather more to do with people than animals.

The chapter on conservation is good in parts – it provides a useful analysis of the sections of the Wildlife and Countryside Act dealing with 'protected birds' and other protected animals – but it is also frustrating because it does not even mention the Act's provisions relating to habitat conservation, although the latter is far more relevant to the plight of many of Britain's animals than the laws prohibiting their killing or capture.

Nevertheless, the book is a valuable introduction to a subject on which far too little has been written, and each chapter is followed by comprehensive references and excellent suggestions for further reading, which are always useful.

Simon Lyster, Senior Conservation Officer (International), World Wide Fund for Nature, UK

Natural History of Vampire Bats

Edited by A.M. Greenhall and U. Schmidt
CRC Press, Florida, 1988, 246 pp., HB £109.00

At the publication price, I am not sure who this book is intended for—it certainly will be out of the reach of many of the Latin American departments and offices that would find it useful. Notwithstanding, Greenhall and Schmidt have edited a first class work dealing with the three blood-feeding bats of Central and South America.

While there have been periods of intense study of vampire bats, due to their association with the spread of rabies in cattle, it would appear that this is no longer regarded as a major problem, indeed figures given in a chapter on economic losses due to the common vampire suggest that overall losses of about

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0.2 per cent are attributable to this bat. Of course, these losses are concentrated (in time and locality), when they may be severe. And rabies is not the only vampire-related problem: these bats are also important in initiating outbreaks of surra and the wounds they leave provide access to other micro-organisms and insects, including screw-worm. But it is surprising to read that many of the disease organisms that could potentially be carried by vampires were not found or were of insignificant incidence in the wild. The book also allays common misconceptions about vampires and rabies, such as that the bats cannot be asymptomatic healthy carriers of the virus. A chapter on the control of vampire-borne rabies discusses the pros and cons of various methods, including the potential of oral vaccines, and the strategies for their application.

Vampire-associated problems are of obvious importance, but equal importance is given to other aspects of vampire behaviour: their specialized anatomy, locomotion, social organization, reproduction and feeding behaviour, all contributing to make this one of the most exceptional of animals. Greenhall and Schmidt confess little difficulty in persuading the world's experts in these and other aspects of vampire bat biology to contribute to an invaluable treatise. *Tony Hutson, Bat Conservation Officer, FFPS*

British Red Data Books: 2. Insects

Edited by D.B. Shirt

Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, 1987, 402 pp., £10 including postage

The task of selecting from the UK's 22,500 insect species for a RDB must have been daunting. Many species are very poorly known, often both in their status and in their conservation requirements. Thus it took nearly 10 years and 52

many specialists to select 1800 species (15 per cent in the major orders fully covered). As in many such studies the smaller, better known groups come off worst with between 20 and 28 per cent of the Odonata, Orthoptera, butterflies and aculeate Hymenoptera being aculeate Hymenoptera being given RDB status, while large, less well-known groups such as Diptera and Coleoptera include a much lower percentage; that only 0.7 per cent of the micromoths are included indicates the difficulties of identification, rather than the lack of other problems. Even within the well-known groups other species must have come under serious consideration, such as the orthopteran *Stenobothrus stigmaticus*, restricted to one small area of the Isle of Man. Although there may be doubts about its origin, it would appear to fit at least the 'Rare' category and recently to have been promoted to 'Endangered' by threats to its locality. For each order covered lists of species are allocated to the five categories Endangered, Vulnerable, Rare, Out of Danger or Endemic. There are also appendices of species not recorded since 1900. The main body of the text is taken up with species accounts demonstrating a very wide range of problems both for the entomologist-conservationist and for the insects themselves. It is encouraging to note the frequency of existing protection for many sites with included species, but there are also many individual sites under threat. The large number of species and the diversity of pressures makes it difficult to pick out the major areas of concern, although a brief discussion on 18 principal habitats is included.

Meanwhile only 14 British insect species are specifically protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Tony Hutson, Bat Conservation Officer, FFPS

The Butterflies of Costa Rica and their natural history

P.J. DeVries

Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1987, 327 pp., HB £37.70

Fifty colour plates illustrate the 543 non-hesperoid butterflies recorded from Costa Rica, Central America. These are accompanied by text for each species, giving size, range, host plants, early stages, adult description and details of habitat and behaviour. There are also 35 text illustrations, many depicting immature stages. Introductory chapters cover the biology and systematics of butterflies with particular reference to the Neotropical fauna and to mimicry, so much a feature of Neotropical butterflies. An appendix of larval host-plant relationships is given and a systematic checklist and bibliography. The photographs are excellent, the text concise and uniform. Although a forceful advocate of collecting as the main means of accumulating information required for conservation, DeVries describes the book as a field guide. Field guides should encourage interest, reduce the need for the taking of specimens from the field and enable a wider range of field studies—there is no reason why this book should not do just that.

Tony Hutson, Bat Conservation Officer, FFPS

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