

Zaire. The main take-home messages are that destruction of habitat is the leading cause of the decline in most primate populations, and that conservation of species requires conservation of their habitat, which in turn demands education of local people and politicians on the benefits to them that intelligent management of their natural resources bring. In the second section, the enormous loss of life in capture and transport of primates from some countries, in contrast to the often excellent facilities of others, shows that, given the will, the means for improvement are there. Where a legal trade exists, however, so also does the unscrupulous dealer, and papers both in this and the first section emphasise that enforcement of laws in practice, as well as on paper, is vital. The conclusion from the papers in the final section is that captive breeding to supply nearly all the needs of zoos and, in particular, laboratories is not only ethically and medically desirable, but economically feasible: with few exceptions, for example a pest species, no valid reason remains for the continuing trade in wild-caught animals.

Many papers stressed the need for more knowledge and its dissemination if adequate conservation measures are to be taken, and *Primate Ecology* goes a long way to providing that need. With 19 original papers on 17 species from 15 genera of 6 families in some 20 countries that span almost the whole range of primate distribution, plus two concluding chapters on intra and interspecific differences and the three appendices on methods, this book is a very important addition to the primate literature. All relevant libraries should have it, although conservation is rarely mentioned, including those devoted to this vital aspect of man's stay on earth.

A.H. HARCOURT.

Deer by **Raymond E Chaplin**. Blandford, £5.75
Badgers, by **Ernest Neal**. Blandford, £7.25

Mammals are enormously popular and books about them occupy a big space in most natural history libraries. Do we need a new series on mammals? They are notoriously difficult to study, and knowledge about their biology accumulates gradually and from diverse sources, so periodic reviews of groups or species will always be necessary. On these grounds the new series is to be welcomed.

Deer form a taxonomically compact group but are highly adaptable and widespread. As successful herbivores, they are, on the one hand capable of becoming damaging pests but on the other may suffer from the pressures of habitat modification and destruction. Their future conservation and management will require detailed knowledge of the complex relationships between biology, behaviour and environment. Disappointingly, the author largely omits consideration of numbers, distribution and dynamics of populations, concentrating on the behavioural and autecological aspects. However, given this limited scope, it is valuable to have, in a concise form, a good deal of information about the world's 40 or so species. Some of the material presented relies on existing information but is enlivened by the author's own first-hand experience, and the sections on behaviour, feeding and breeding biology are informative and interesting, containing a good deal of factual information with useful comparisons between species. But the overall effect is disjointed and it is largely left to the reader to deduce for himself the ways in which the information provided can be applied to deer management. The book is well produced and copiously and elegantly illustrated, and will certainly have a wide appeal to both amateur and professional biologists at all levels.

Thirty years separate Dr Neal's first monograph on badgers and his present treatise. In the meantime, he and other researchers have advanced knowledge of the badger to a stage when a more complete picture of its mode of life can be assembled than for any other British mammal. In undertaking this task Dr Neal has combined in an enchanting way the results of rigorous scientific observation with a flair for the relevant and meaningful anecdote. The result is both entirely convincing and eminently readable, presenting, in a well-ordered sequence, up-to-date information on all the important aspects of badgers as individuals and as members of social groups and populations.

Overlying the scientific rigour of the book is a sense of humanity and humour which enhance the reputations of author and badger in about equal measure. Chapter 1 tells us how to study badgers and Chapter 12 how to live with them, and the well illustrated intervening chapters enlighten us in both these laudable pursuits.

F.B. O'CONNOR

The Dragonflies of Great Britain and Ireland, by Cyril O. Hammond, Curwen, £9.75.

The book includes beautiful colour plates, explanatory text, and keys to genera (although not, as claimed, to species) of the adults of all the British dragonflies and damselflies. It also includes up-to-date distribution maps and a key to larvae. All other comparable books are now out of print.

As a guide to identification it certainly fulfils its purpose admirably, but overall this is a fairly expensive book with an outdated outlook. Unlike the present conservation-oriented butterfly books, this seems to be written for collectors. Since many of the species can be identified in the field with binoculars and patience, it is a pity the methods of collection and preservation and the description of aberrant forms are afforded so much detail. It is likely that these vulnerable insects are good 'indicators': a good variety of species in an area would probably mean a healthy aquatic environment. It is noted that some species have decreased in recent years, but one is left virtually unaware of the threats posed to the larvae by drainage and pollution. Some species may be under-recorded, but of the 44 species only sixteen are recorded in more than 10 per cent of the 10-km squares with recent records. Of these only three are very widespread, occurring in more than one third of the total squares. Seventeen species have records in less than two per cent of the squares—three are probably extinct, three are irregular immigrants, and eleven are extremely restricted by habitat or climate.

It is a matter of regret that the New Naturalist 'Dragonflies' has not been updated and reprinted because that instilled the desire to study and conserve these delightful creatures in a way that the present volume could never do.

TIM INSKIPP

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