

Book reviews

piecing together a fascinating story of an animal's adaptation to a harsh environment. The treatment is journalistic ('Medical researchers are amazed at the hibernation of bears'), and the account is often rushed and sometimes a little awry, but there is a mass of information presented in a graphic and readable form. A long list of titles for further reading is very useful for anyone who wishes to delve deeper into polar bear biology. The most enjoyable parts are the accounts of the investigators' own encounters with these marvellous beasts. They are well told and avoid both sensation and whimsy.

The high point of the book, however, is the illustrations. It is not easy to select 80-odd colour pictures of one mammal species, and a white animal against a white background more often than not, without becoming very boring. Dan Guravich has managed this feat. All the pictures have something to say and there are many excellent shots showing aspects of behaviour, including several sequences of social interactions.

Robert Burton
Naturalist and author

National Parks of Western Europe

Angus Waycott

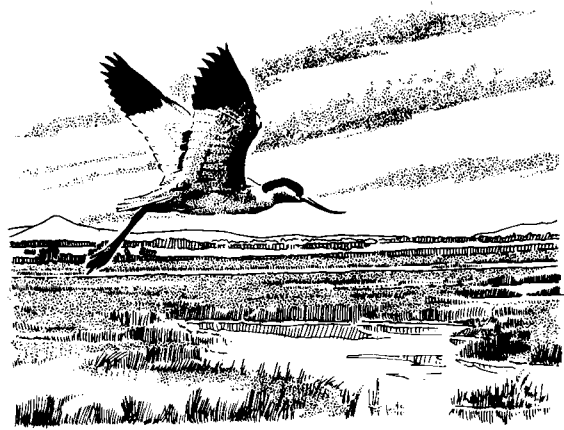
Inklon Publications, Southampton,
1983, £4.95 (HB) or £2.95 (PB).*

The first national parks in Western Europe were set up in Sweden in 1909, 37 years after Yellowstone National Park. But a lot has happened since. There are now 84 national parks in 15 countries of Western Europe, or 74 if those in England and Wales are excluded on the grounds that they are not national parks *sensu stricto* but protected landscapes.

Mr Waycott has been generous in including the national parks of England and Wales in his book. Had he not done so, there would of course be no entry at all under the United Kingdom, because there are no national parks in either Northern Ireland or Scotland—a curious anomaly, you might think, when there are now three parks in the Republic of Ireland and no fewer than 31 in Scandinavia.

Mr Waycott devotes a succinct page to each park.

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The avocet is one of the many bird species that can be seen in the wetland of Tablas de Daimiel National Park in Spain.

The pages are small, there are no detailed maps and no photographs, but no matter: the purpose is not to provide a definitive account of the parks but to introduce them to the reader. If you plan a summer holiday in Norway or Yugoslavia, you can use this useful book to identify where the national parks are, what they contain, what you can do there, where you can stay, how you can get to them and to whom you should write for further details.

The first 50 pages, though, are a thoughtful essay



The Spanish lynx, one of the mammals that live in the cork oak forests of Coto Donana National Park in Spain.

Oryx Vol 18 No 3

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Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, one of two species of pelican which nest at Lake Mikri Prespa National Park in northern Greece.

on the role of national parks in Western Europe. The author is realistic rather than sentimental about conservation, very much in tune with the philosophy of the World Conservation Strategy. I have two small complaints. He ought to have said more about the vital part played by the staff of the national parks, especially the field staff of rangers and wardens. And there is a misunderstanding about the role of IUCN's Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas: it is *not* responsible for the *Red Data Books* of endangered species, as readers of *Oryx* will surely know.

Angus Waycott's book has a rival to contend with, Eric Duffey's *National Parks and Reserves of Western Europe* (published in 1982). But the similarity is confined to the title. Duffey's is a coffee table volume costing £15, Waycott's is a more practical paperback at £3. I would strongly recommend Waycott's *National Parks of Western Europe* to any conservation-minded tourist planning a holiday in Europe; perhaps the publishers might be persuaded to have it translated into other European languages so that it can serve a wider readership still.

Adrian Phillips,
Director, Countryside Commission

*Also available from Inkdon Publications, Solas House, Test Road, Eastern Docks, Southampton SO1 1GG. Add 60p and
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50p (for HB and PB respectively) to price given above for postage and packing.

Corals of the World

Elizabeth M. Wood

T.F.H. Publications, Inc., 1983

Available from T.F.H. (Great Britain)

Ltd, 11 Ormside Way, Holmethorpe

Industrial Estate, Redhill, Surrey

RH1 2PX. £19.95

With increasing enthusiasm for SCUBA diving, the growing need for survey work to identify conservation problems on reefs, and the rapid expansion of tourism in countries with coral reefs, this book will certainly be in great demand. Unlike previous books on corals, it is not intended for specialists, but for more general marine scientists and reef workers, for students of tropical marine biology and for naturalists, amateur divers and underwater photographers. The author herself experienced the frustration of trying to identify corals when surveying the proposed Semporna Marine Park for WWF Malaya and the idea of the book was born then.

Corals are notoriously difficult to identify, whether as living animals on a reef, or as bleached skeletons in museums and curio shops. Underwater, a coral reef presents a profusion of different colours and forms but unfortunately this