

and laments that the deserts continue to advance aided by the goats and sheep of unenlightened and hungry nations. Man must hurry to control his own numbers and adopt a beneficial ecological balance if he is to avoid the "final catastrophe of our species," which cannot be too often reiterated; but the author believes that man, who "is naturally compassionate, will pull through in the long run." A thought-provoking book, revealing the author's own compassionate wisdom.

R. M. LOCKLEY.

The Pattern of Animal Communities, by Charles S. Elton.
Methuen, 90s.

In fifty years time, when computers have really got going on ecology, men will look back to this as one of the books that pointed the way ahead. Today, when the human brain is the best computer the ecologist has, because it can work with incomplete data, we can still be staggered at the amount and complexity of information Charles Elton has been able to compress into one pair of covers about one small piece of English countryside.

Wytham, the University of Oxford's 3400-acre estate just outside Oxford, has over the past twenty years been the scene of one of the most intensive—perhaps the most intensive—ecological surveys ever carried out. So far 3800 animal species out of an estimated 5000 have been proved to live at Wytham, representing as much as one-sixth or even one-fifth of the whole British fauna in an area, rich in varied habitats, that is only 1/60,000th of Britain. Yet even after all these years, pathetically little information is available about the vast majority of these animals and how they fit into the scheme of things at Wytham. No computer can work unless it is programmed, and again and again Charles Elton has had to resort to data from other parts of England or even—for beechwoods—other parts of Europe to fill out his story. Lucky ecologists fifty years hence, when the data from fifty more years' work can be fed into a mechanical computer!

This is a book that must be read and re-read to appreciate the fantastic complexity of the web of animal life, and how incredibly little we still know about it. The first fifty years of ecology have really only been scratching on the surface, but this book represents one of the deepest furrows yet made.

RICHARD FITTER.

Living with Deer, by Richard Prior. Deutsch, 25s.

This is the fourth in the Survival series designed to link the public more closely with a series of wildlife films produced by Anglia Television. The author has not attempted to write a book about any specific film; what he has done, and very successfully, is to produce a general and very readable account of the history of deer in Britain, their survival to the present day, and the methods that are now being used to safeguard them from cruelty. A particularly valuable final chapter deals with the present and future of deer, and the sensible and adequate control of them in face of increasing pressures on living space for man and beast. Although deer are probably more numerous today than they have been for centuries, he shows that it is possible to overcome the problems they present by sensible management, and that this is practical common sense for both farmer and forester. In learning to live with deer, inhumane treatment of them can have no place.

The author of this quite delightful book writes from personal experience and makes a sound contribution to the cause of conservation in this country. It will appeal to all who love our countryside and its wildlife. If deer are to hold a place in it, a wider interest in them is important, and Richard Prior's book contributes much towards this.

F. J. TAYLOR PAGE.