

drastically, but little is known of its present status and no information is provided as to the interaction, if any, between the native mink and feral American mink.

A great deal of interesting work is currently being published on the mammals of Europe but the task of synthesising it is complicated by the multiplicity of nations and languages. This compilation, being competent, well balanced and up to date, will therefore be relevant and welcome beyond the confines of France.

G. B. CORBET

Charles Waterton's Wanderings in South America, edited by Gilbert Phelps. Charles Knight, £4.

Waterton was a splendid eccentric—perhaps the French *un original* describes him better. He made his Yorkshire estate into a 19th century precursor of Minsmere. He experimented with the poison *curare*. He rode on the back of an alligator he wanted to capture uninjured. During the Napoleonic era and the Spanish–American Wars of Liberation he spent years in the wild country between the Orinoco and the Amazon, always with a keen eye and an insatiable curiosity for every aspect of nature. The oddities of his style will not appeal to everyone, particularly his tiresome discourses to the ‘kind and gentle reader’ and his addiction to Latin tags, while his stubborn refusal to use scientific names is only redeemed by the glossary compiled by David Snow.

Waterton's contributions to taxidermy and his original zoological discoveries were long ago absorbed into the general body of scientific knowledge. What makes his narratives still readable is the personality of the author, endearing and infuriating, that emerges on every page.

G. T. CORLEY SMITH

A Field Guide to the Insects of Britain and Northern Europe, by Michael Chinery. Collins, £2.95.

Studying Insects—a practical guide, by R. L. E. Ford. Warne, £2.50.

This field guide attempts the daunting task of helping the beginner to learn something about insects, their structure, their classification and their life histories. It includes workable keys to the insect groups, and the confirmed lepidopterist will discover almost for the first time what structural features are used to separate the major groups of moths and butterflies. There are 60 colour plates and many line drawings, a ten-page glossary and five pages of selected bibliography listing books which take the matter further. For its price it is very good value, and schools and university students as well as amateur naturalists who collect will find it extremely helpful to have illustrated keys to insect orders and families and good enlarged colour pictures of so many common British insects. The end papers have colour pictures with reference numbers to the plates where other related insects can be found. Whether ‘Northern Europe’ correctly indicates the habitat of the foreign insects illustrated is more open to doubt—many of them seem to be Mediterranean, but this is not a disadvantage. The book has been prepared with very great care, has very few (mostly trivial) typographical errors, and should be very attractive to a wide public.

The second book claims to be a fully revised edition of ‘Practical Entomology’ (1963) but many mistakes remain unchanged. It is a chatty

account of how an amateur entomologist can catch, breed and study a variety of insects, but the emphasis is firmly on the butterflies, with moths a poor second, and although the photographs illustrate a number of other insects they are treated very superficially. The book is quite fun to read and will give naturalists a number of useful tips. There are chapters on conservation and on how to attract butterflies to the garden, but the chapters on insect classification and insect structure are very inaccurate and often quite misleading.

G. C. VARLEY

Brief Reviews

Wild Beauty, by Kailish Sankhala (National Book Trust, India, A-5 Green Park, New Delhi 16, Rs. 15.50) consists largely of the author's splendid photographs, mainly of large mammals, some in colour. The tiger features conspicuously as would be expected from the able Director of Project Tiger. The text gives a knowledgeable survey of the wildlife of the national parks and sanctuaries.

From *A Bevy of Beasts* via *A Lush of Lions*, *A Triumph of Tigers*, a *Plash of Polars*, and so on, to a *Superiority of Camels*, Gerald Durrell continues his inimitable merry accounts of life with animals in *Beasts in my Belfry* (Collins, £2.00), this time in his early days as student keeper at Whipsnade. The episodes are recounted with his usual gusto and light-hearted humour, but always with the underlying seriousness and understanding of one whose life is devoted to animals and their conservation.

There is a short account of Estonian wildlife reserves and sanctuaries in *The Country and the People*, by Dr J. Eilart, Chairman of the Nature Conservation Centre, Tartu State University, published in an English translation and illustrated in colour; Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1973.

Volume 8 of *The Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, Warblers to Redstarts, by Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley (Oxford UP, £8.00), has been published and will be reviewed with the final volumes when they appear.

Pedigree: essays on the etymology of words from nature, by Stephen Potter and Laurens Sargent, is an odd book to find in the *New Naturalist* (Collins, £3.15). This is harking back to the Victorian naturalists with a vengeance. A splendid bedside book, brainchild of the late senior author, and dedicated to his co-brain-parent, the late James Fisher. But you will find no entries for conservation, preservation or protection, nor even for nature reserve. Horrid modern Latinisms all!

A rather severe looking booklet from the Smithsonian on the *Evolution of the Rails of the South Atlantic Islands*, by Storrs L. Olson (Smithsonian Contributions to Zoology, no. 152, 70 cents) tells a good deal about the processes of extinction in these birds, so vulnerable to the deforestation of small oceanic islands. And one of these, the Tristan moorhen, has recently been rediscovered.

Common Birds of Cyprus, by J. M. E. Took (Pinkhill Books, Pinkhill Lodge, Eynsham, Oxford, £1.37) will be a great help to birdwatching visitors and Servicemen in the island. Unlike other books on the subject, it is pocket-sized and has all its 86 species illustrated in colour.

Birds of North America, by Bertel Bruun (Hamlyn, £1.75), is an attractive picture book with many photographs, 37 of them in colour, and a short and informative text based on habitat.