

without any conclusion. However, the result is that the reader is better placed to judge any attempt to press a point of view. Some topics are treated less than adequately but, bearing in mind both the complexity of a subject that encompasses farming practice, badger ecology, bacteriology and immunology, and the gaps in our knowledge of the disease, this booklet is required first reading. Hopefully, the planned second edition will rectify the deficiencies.

ROBERT BURTON

Historical Plant Geography, an introduction, by **Philip Stott**. Allen & Unwin, Hardback £12.00. Paperback £5.95.

There has been a great upsurge in the publication of ecological books in recent years. Interest in ecology largely grew out of the knowledge gained in the nineteenth century about the geographical distribution of plant species and vegetation types over the Earth, but in the last 30 years there have been few books on this subject, and a text, which will serve both for introductory courses at university and for use at school, is long overdue.

Dr Stott has written the book that was needed. After introducing the subject, he discusses the recording of plant distributions, mapping of plants and patterns of distribution and then turns to the interpretation of these patterns, a field in which there has been ample scope for controversy in the past. He finishes with a brief account of genetic resource conservation, which he rightly emphasizes as a central concern of plant geographers among others.

In this well written and well illustrated little book the non-specialist will find much of interest. Though intended for a student readership the intelligent and interested layman can read it with profit, and it may well turn such readers to the wider literature of plant geography.

S.R.J. WOODSELL

Conservation of New World Parrots, edited by **Roger F. Pasquier**. Smithsonian Institution Press for ICBP. Technical Publication no. 1, £8.00.

The word Parrot first appeared in written English about 1525. Its origin is uncertain for there is no comparable word in any other language, and unusually in our linguistic rag-bag it is a word which has remained completely unchanged. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the status of many of the birds themselves. This volume, the proceedings of the ICBP working group meeting held in April, 1980, clearly shows the serious threats that parrots are having to contend with, particularly in the New World. These threats, direct and indirect, which may well lead to the extinction of some species, are in almost all cases the results of man's greed. As with many animals and plants the accelerating destruction or alteration of natural ecosystems is one of the main causes of changes in numbers and distribution. With this family of birds, it is also man's direct actions which pose threats, either by killing for food or feathers, or by capturing alive for the apparently growing international trade. Until the 1980 meeting, what was not known in detail was what effect these threats were having or are likely to have on individual species.

The majority of the 28 papers give some of the answers by providing the necessary background data on status, distribution, ecology, and in some cases, on captive breeding. The working group, using this data, devised conservation strategies country by country (pp 1-20) for parrots of the Caribbean and neo-

tropic regions. These strategies could, if implemented, have far-reaching effects, not only for parrots, but for the survival of many other species.

It is usually invidious to pick out particular papers, but Robert Ridgley's 151 pages on the current distribution and status of mainland neotropical parrots is a most important document. It is based on data gathered over six years, including an immense amount of field work. He summarizes for each species information on range, habitat and status. His conclusions are sane, liberal and practical, and should be read by all those concerned with parrot conservation.

There are a number of relatively minor criticisms: the next meeting of the group is to be in 1984 not 1974, p xiii; Scott or Scoot? pp 397, 400; references in text but not listed, or vice versa, e.g. pp 171, 198. I am not sure of the relevance of a paper on feeding apparatus, or on a captive-bred *Amazona* hybrid and its offspring, within the general theme of the book. A major fault is the lack of an index.

Overall though this is an admirable and timely book, and ICBP are to be congratulated on making it their first technical publication. It is a really excellent harbinger of what I hope will be a long and useful series.

P.J.S. OLNEY

Available from Roger Pasquier, ICBP President's Office (Room MNH-336), Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC 20560, USA.

Wildlife and Nature Photography, by Michael Freeman. Croom Helm. London, £13.95.

At first glance this seems just another book on wildlife photography although a little more lavish than most. Closer inspection reveals it is much more than that. The book is divided into seven sections. The first, a short introduction, is followed by a concise yet thorough description of types of equipment with useful and constructive charts showing suitability for various subjects. This is followed by an excellent section on fieldwork describing stalking, types and the construction of hides, and close-up techniques. This particular section is very thorough and contains a host of sensible hints and tips of how to get the best when photographing wildlife, with a particular emphasis on the need for understanding and care. The next two sections could conceivably have been put together as one, dealing as they do with the environment and special locations. These primarily deal with technique, specialized equipment, and how to care for it whilst on location. The penultimate section is on studio photography. Again this is particularly thorough and extremely useful – an area of natural history photography not often covered in books of this type. The last section is a brief gazetteer, giving a small list of places known for their wealth of photographic opportunities. Full of good quality colour and black and white photographs, supplemented by sensible, and I thought, particularly instructive black and white line drawings. One of the best books on this subject I have seen.

TIM PARMENTER

Seaweeds and their Uses, by U.J. and D.J. Chapman. Chapman and Hall, London and New York, £17.50.

To most people the study of seaweeds (marine algae) is a relatively esoteric subject with little significance to the world at large. When I answer this by pointing out that every day, every person in the British Isles uses a substance or product derived from seaweed, there is considerable surprise. Casual perusal of this book will confirm this.