

habitat for both. He devotes the earlier part of this valuable book to general ecological considerations, accepting the view that populations are controlled in a density-dependent manner and discussing the predator-prey relationship with reference to particular species. Chapters on Birds in Forests, on the Farm, in Horticulture, in Fishing Waters and in Industry review the results of recent ecological research and experience. His examination of the effects of agricultural changes since the war, the study of how much and what birds eat, their pests and chemical warfare on those pests provide perhaps the most interesting part of the whole book. The extent to which adaptations to these changes may be showing us evolution in progress is illuminated by a great deal of detail which merits careful perusal. An example is the development in the reed bunting of new habitat tolerances and even food preferences. One could have wished that Dr Murton had found room for a more satisfying final chapter. What is his answer to the questions which in effect he poses: Can we afford the absolute or attainable maximum requirement of quantitative productivity at the expense of destroying or gravely impairing our traditional environment? Should man maximise his own numbers at the expense of wildlife or regulate them to a level which will allow him to enjoy something of his natural heritage?

Mr Rupert Barrington is to be congratulated on having managed to pack into his book so many sound and practical suggestions for conserving a wide range of common birds, and attracting more marginal visitors in, and into, suburban and other gardens by careful planning and planting, by providing nest boxes and nesting sites – and by excluding enemies, of which cats may be the worst.

HURCOMB

**The Life of Mammals, Volume 2, by L. Harrison Matthews. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £4.25.**

The first volume of this work, dealing with many aspects of mammals in general, appeared in 1969. This second volume completes the task with a systematic account dealing with the enormous diversity of the world's mammals, family by family, with some mention of almost every genus. Primates, however, are regrettably excluded with the excuse that they have already been dealt with in a separate volume of this series: *The Life of Primates* by A.H. Schultz. Those whose enthusiasm for primates does not stretch to paying an extra £3.15 may well feel blackmailed!

The subject matter, dealing as it does with the diversity of mammals, is very different from that of the excellent book with identical title (surely an unnecessary source of confusion) by Professor J.Z. Young. Nor does it attempt to compete with the many books that depend primarily upon illustration: with thirty monochrome photographs and a very few line drawings, it is not copiously illustrated.

Having made these remarks, more by way of defining the scope of the book than in criticism, it remains to say what an extraordinarily skilful job the author has done. While the emphasis is on what mammals do, the behaviour is closely correlated with structure, producing a nice compromise between the anatomical approach and the more recent tendency to go to the other extreme and treat mammals as statistics in life-tables (or even replace them by mathematical models). The material has been carefully selected, with valuable summaries of some very recent studies, and the text is repeatedly enhanced by the author's great

personal experience. It is skilfully written, with a refreshing avoidance of the clichés that can so easily mar such a work.

Even the professional mammalogist will be continuously intrigued by the amount of little-known but highly significant information, all backed up by discreet reference to a copious bibliography. There is a description of how black rhinos use their horns to snap off thick branches of *Euphorbia* trees; of cooperation in hunting between a jackal and a cheetah; of recent work on grazing successions in the Serengeti Plains; and of the remarkable air-sacs and voice of the walrus. Some of the less credible, but frequently repeated, tales of mammalian prowess are given critical attention and put in proper perspective.

G. B. CORBET

**The Natural History of an English Forest**, by Norman E. Hickin. Hutchinson, £3.

**Charm of the Cheviots**, by Henry Tegner. Frank Graham, £2.10.

**A Naturalist on Speyside**, by Henry Tegner. Geoffrey Bles, £1.75.

The English forest of which Dr. Hickin writes is Wyre, which although only some 20 miles from the centre of Birmingham still retains almost 3,000 acres of its original 'old oak'. Systematically, group by group, he describes and illustrates in accurate drawings the forest's wildlife which has drawn him back over the past 50 years whenever he could get away from professional duties in the south. Wyre Forest has a quite remarkable flora and fauna, and Dr. Hickin's account becomes almost a synopsis of British natural history. But it is no mere catalogue; many fascinating byways are explored, and the author's enthusiasm is so infectious that, at the end, this reviewer felt that he had been privileged to take part in a conducted natural history excursion in which fifty years had magically been compressed into a single afternoon.

Whereas Dr. Hickin writes as a field naturalist, Mr. Tegner's inclinations are towards field sports which occasionally lead to some apparent inconsistencies. Thus we read, 'I have never met a fox-hunter who does not love Charles James the Fox, pungent beast that he is'. Again, on otters, 'An angling association had the rights to fish for several miles on both banks. The voluntary wardens saw to it that otters could not exist on the association's waters. Elimination was almost inevitable. This was the usual state of affairs on nearly all waters not frequented by the otter hunters. For once again it was the man who was the hunter who was the preserver . . . The otter would seem to be undergoing some process of population decline; and yet there has been no particular attempt to artificially de-populate the species . . . No one really knows as yet why otters appear to be scarcer.'

Like Dr. Hickin Mr. Tegner draws on 50 years experience of the wild fauna of his beloved area and he includes interesting accounts of the feral goats and the famous Chillingham white cattle also. The illustrations include, appropriately, reproductions of some of Thomas Bewick's wood-cuts.

In *A Naturalist on Speyside* Mr. Tegner displays a considerable knowledge also of another classic area for naturalists. Red deer and roe, reindeer, feral goats, blue hares, wild cats, foxes, golden eagles and the famous ospreys all provide interesting chapters, and he describes the impact of tourism and its effects on one who knew Cairn Gorm in its peaceful days. The book contains many photographic illustrations.

JOHN CLEGG