

Book reviews

also a 15-page bibliography to help those who wish to give further study to particular aspects, and a useful checklist of plants and animals.

The author's history is a little less accurate than his natural history, but this is not a matter of great moment: scientists often fail to check historical information with the care they would consider obligatory in their own disciplines. Mr Jackson is a sound biologist and knows the islands intimately, having taken part in the Cambridge University Darwin Centenary Galapagos Expedition as well as serving there for years as a naturalist guide. He writes simple, straightforward English with a minimum of scientific jargon, even in his chapter on 'Colonisation, Evolution and Ecology'. When he is driven to use technical expressions, he explains them.

Altogether, this is a useful addition to Galapagos literature. How I wish there had been a comparable book when I first visited the Galapagos a generation ago.

G.T. Corley Smith

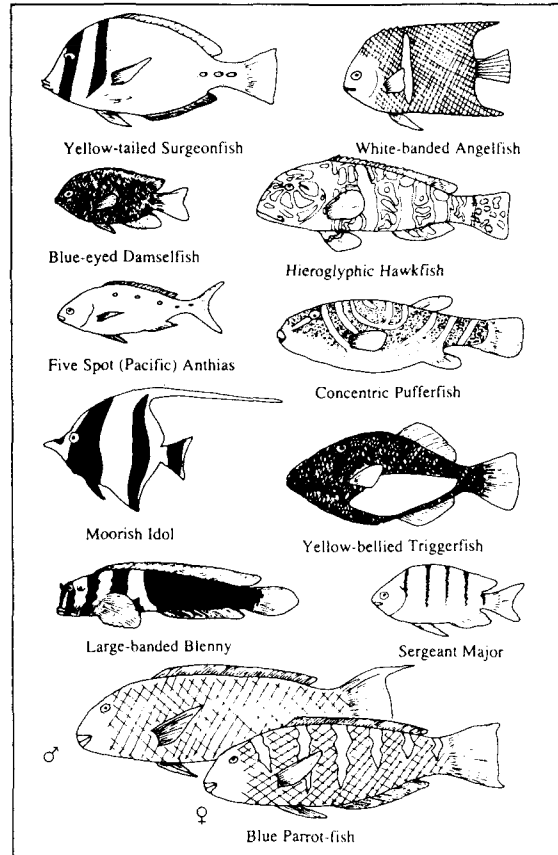
A Directory of Crocodilian Farming Operations

R.A. Luxmore, J.G. Barzdo, S.R. Broad and D.A. Jones

Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit, IUCN, 1985. £8

When the TRAFFIC Group (ancestor of the World Trade Monitoring Unit) was being run from the FFPS office, one of the first projects developed was a survey of wildlife farms. Nearly 10 years later success has been achieved and a comprehensive survey carried out. This publication is part of the results. It is difficult to eulogize the style, but I can say that it is a basic research tool for anyone interested in crocs or captive breeding. A goldmine of facts and figures, it lists every known farm, country by country. Crocodile farming is a growth industry, but its effects on wild crocs are mixed. Ranching, which uses wild animals, may be a better option, since it involves habitat conservation. However, the main threat is summarized in the last line of the introduction. 'The high levels of illegal trade in crocodilian products suggest that the current degree of control is far from adequate in many parts of the world.'

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Some Galapagos fish (based on drawings by Sir Peter Scott). From *Galapagos: A Natural History Guide*, published by University of Calgary Press. The book contains over 100 black-and-white photos and illustrations, and a 16-page full-colour insert.

The Blue Holes of the Bahamas

Robert Palmer

Jonathan Cape, 1985, HB £10.95

Blue Holes are the entrances to some of the world's most spectacular underwater caves. The first exploration of the Bahamian Blue Holes was as recent as the 1960s, and since then those on Andros have been surveyed in some detail by Rob Palmer's team. His book, written as a tale of adventure and exploration, provides an exciting account of their discoveries, culminating in a 1984 expedition, which was the subject of a BBC documentary. Apart from a giant moray eel encountered rather uncomfortably by the author in a narrow passage, most Blue Hole wildlife cannot be described as spectacular, but it is treasure to the biologist. An entire new order of

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crustaceans, the Remipedia, and numerous new species have been found, many of which are living fossils with particular adaptations to their dark underwater life. A major scientific expedition is being planned for 1987 to take up this biological and geological challenge and to fully document the fauna. The book ends with an important conservation message, pointing out the narrow path trod between scientific discovery and the opening up of the caves to abuse and destruction: 'If we play with the caves, if we treat them as toys, they will die'. The Lucayan Cavern on Grand Bahama, the world's largest known underwater cave system, has now been made a national park administered by the Bahamas National Trust; Rob Palmer's book makes a clear case for treating such an exciting and fragile ecosystem with great care.

Sue Wells, Conservation Monitoring Centre, IUCN

Birds in Scotland

Valerie M. Thom

T. & A.D. Poyser Ltd, 1986, 382 pp, drawings, maps, photographs, £24

This book constitutes an up-to-date review of the status of the birds, together with impressive chapters on distribution, habitat, conservation and protection. Authoritatively and attractively written, this is a mine of information and has been produced to the usual exacting standards one now expects from Poyser's. Pity about some of the drawings though: the tree creeper, some finches, yellow-browed and barred warblers, for example, leave much to be desired.

Tim Parmenter, British Museum (Natural History)

Life of the Woodpecker

Alexander Skutch

Croom Helm, Beckenham, Kent, UK, 1986, 136 pp, £45

Despite their popularity, there are few major works on woodpeckers. This is not a taxonomic monograph, and hardly covers their systematics, evolution and identification, but Alexander Skutch has presented a very readable account of their life history, well applying his long ex-

perience, particularly in Central America. It is beautifully illustrated, with paintings by Dana Gardner of nearly one-third of the 200 species. A chapter on Woodpeckers and Man discusses the problems that woodpeckers can make for man and that man can make for woodpeckers in modern forest clearance or management methods, and the inadequacies of most reforestation. Many species are already threatened—predictably, since the status of many woodpeckers is reflected in the 'abundance of trees in all stages of their natural cycle of germination, growth, flowering, fruiting and decay'.

The book is one of the modern genre of lavish (and hence expensive) productions.

A.M. Hutson

Also received

The Ecology of Woodland Rodents: Bank Voles and Woodmice. The Proceedings of a Symposium held at the Zoological Society of London on 23 and 24 November 1984.

Edited by J.R. Flowerdew, J. Gurnell and J.H.W. Gipps

Oxford University Press, 1986, £42.00

This collection of 14 papers from 16 contributors covers behaviour, communication, reproduction, food, energetics, genetics, predators and parasites, movement, the dynamics and modelling of populations, and community ecology.

The Biosphere Catalogue.

Editor-in-Chief, Tango Parrish Snyder

Synergetic Press, 1985, £9.95 PB

Designed to develop a conceptual understanding for the 'student' of the biosphere, this catalogue touches upon 24 areas of study, from biomes to microbes, from cultures to travel. Contributors include Norman Myers, author of *The Sinking Ark* and General Editor of *The Gaia Atlas of Planetary Management*, Alwyn Gentry and Ghillean Prance.

Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape

Barry Lopez

Macmillan London, 1986, £14.95 HB

A celebration of the Arctic landscape, its wild animals and its people.