

on a Faunal Survey of this territory. He has seen the infant of 40 years ago grow up by stages to maturity and finally to adult perfection.

A concise description of habitats, together with reference to their bird populations (evoking nostalgic memories of 1931-32), is supported by informative monochrome photographs. The systematic list, occupying 330 pages, is a striking example of how a little ingenuity enables limited provision of the maximum essential information – distribution, habitat, breeding and bibliographical references. Wetmore's arrangement is followed for families, but the specific order and nomenclature are according to White's revised African Check Lists (1961-65).

Four Appendices comprise a bibliography – 38 titles, comprising 500 references, all related to the systematic list which incorporates a complete list of published references to each known Zambia species; a 14-page gazetteer of place names with their co-ordinates; six pages of ringing recoveries and three pages of distribution maps. An index of scientific names is followed by one giving English names; a useful map of Zambia is printed inside front and back boards.

Altogether, a most valuable compendium, more a pocket text-book than just a *Field Guide*.

C.R.S. PITMAN

Woodland Birds, by Eric Simms. Collins, £3.

Which of our birds can fairly be grouped as falling into the description of woodland birds? Apart from those which are primarily denizens of high forest and deep moors, numerous and varied species frequent the margins, fringes and clearings of woods of all sorts and sizes, and find in such territories, at least for some seasons of the year, their essential requirement for food, shelter or nesting. And what indeed is woodland?

Intimately acquainted with both birds and countryside, Eric Simms answers the first question for practical purposes in a detailed survey of the range of the second. He is familiar in many countries with high forest, extensive woods, groves, belts, clumps, thickets and scrub, and has studied bird life wherever trees occur as well as the varying habitats provided by different layers of foliage from the canopy down to the ground cover. No more delightful approach to his subject can be imagined than a walk with him through the woods, such as he invites the reader to take in his fourth chapter, to spend a long summer day with him in one of our oakwoods, pedunculate or sessile as may be closer at hand, with eyes and ears well open. His comments are scientifically based and many of them confirm or develop the impressions of experienced ornithologists, but the spirit in which they are made has a Chaucerian freshness and Gilbert White's sympathy with the charm of a wooded landscape well populated.

The group of woodland birds, however narrowly or loosely we define it, is perhaps of particular interest both as illustrating the origins of much of our avifauna and as offering, readily available to a wide range of people, fields of study of the changes in status and distribution of important species, changes which are still in progress with the spread of afforestation, the introduction of conifers and the new habitats provided in the stages of plantation, where populations will develop, shift and recover. Space is rightly devoted to the so-called 'ecotones' where woods shade off into wooded heaths or the important areas of traditional parkland, orchards and suburban gardens. A chapter on woodland birds in towns might seem but is not at all out of place.

The author, the editors and the publishers are entitled to look with satisfaction at this fifty-second volume of the *New Naturalist* which its readers will greatly enjoy.

CYRIL HURCOMB

The Mammals of Botswana, by Reay H.N.Smithers. National Museums of Rhodesia, £10.50 including postage.

Libyan Mammals, by Ernst Hufnagl. Oleander Press, £4.

Both these volumes are comprehensive but concise reference works on the mammals of a single African country: comprehensive in that all species of mammals are included, and all aspects from identification and distribution to behaviour and ecology mentioned; concise in organizing this information in a systematic and retrievable way in a single, manageable volume. Beyond that they differ considerably.

The mammals of Botswana was almost a virgin field of study when Reay Smithers set out in 1964 on a five-year programme of field work, assisted by teams from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington. The result is a masterly report of a standard that has rarely been achieved even in countries with a long history of study. The introduction includes a valuable account of the habitats throughout the country, ranging from the extremes of the Kalahari Desert to the vast swamps of the Okavango Delta; the description of habitat for each species in the systematic section is particularly informative. There are keys for identification throughout and, for each species, paragraphs on taxonomy, distribution, habitat, habits, food, breeding and measurements. A map for each species showing, by quarter degree squares, the present (or very recent) distribution is a particularly valuable feature, only slightly marred by the difficulty, in the case of some of the larger mammals with diminishing ranges, of determining what period of time the map covers. Many species such as the giraffe and tsessebe have disappeared from the southern half of the country, but the northern part still carries a particularly rich fauna of large mammals. Non-original material is well documented. How often does one read how the ratel follows the honey-guide to the bees' nest – but how seldom is one referred, as here, to a source where the evidence for this remarkable behaviour is detailed?

The Libyan volume is much less ambitious, less detailed and less original. Libya has the most continuous record of fossil mammals of any African country and an introductory chapter on these is provided by Dr R.J.G.Savage. A further chapter, by Olwen Brogan, deals with the remarkable trade in large mammals from Libya to the arenas of ancient Rome – on a scale that must surely have brought some of them close to extinction, although the elephant seems to be the only one that was totally lost to North Africa at that time. The systematic section is somewhat erratic in treatment and quality. The accounts of distribution are useful, although there are no species maps. The identification keys have been designed very much for the lay reader – they will fail to give a critical identification of some of the smaller species and, in the case of the larger ones, are rather superfluous in view of the illustrations. Most species are illustrated by either a monochrome photograph or a line drawing – the latter rather crude but nevertheless helpful. In the absence of any comparable work for other parts of North Africa this volume will serve a useful purpose beyond the immediate boundaries of Libya.

G.B. CORBET