

a solitary animal and its habitat is limited. A sudden change in circumstances could quite rapidly bring the otter to the verge of extinction in Great Britain.

G. F.

FIELD GUIDE TO BRITISH DEER. Compiled and edited by F. J. TAYLOR PAGE. Mammal Society of the British Isles (Brock Cottage, Lyndhurst, Hants). 10s. 6d.

Congratulations: to the Mammal Society of the British Isles for sponsoring and publishing, and to its Deer Group and Jim Taylor Page for providing the material for the best guide that I know to the field identification of any group of British wild animals. The Group had the advantage of needing to consider only six species, two natives, the red and roe deer; one long-established alien, the fallow; and three recent aliens, the sika, muntjac and Chinese water deer. Of these the Chinese water deer is so locally distributed, in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire, that it does not receive the full treatment of the other five. These five are discussed in great detail, and with profuse illustration, under the headings of habitat, tracks (where useful outlines show the differences between the spoor of deer and domestic animals), droppings, voice, antler development, seasonal change of coat, gait, food and feeding habits, daily activities and seasonal rhythm of behaviour, i.e. when calves are born, antlers grown, rutting occurs, etc. There are also most useful hints on clothing and equipment for deer watchers, and suggestions for observation and research. Finally, there is a detailed, county-by-county survey of the known distribution of the six species.

The gaps still remaining in our knowledge of the habits and distribution of the feral deer especially, are due to two factors, the ignorance of most naturalists on how to identify deer and the difficulty of observing deer in the wild, even if you do know them apart. Both these difficulties are largely solved by this admirable little book and there is no longer the slightest excuse for deer remaining a neglected group of British mammals. As one twelve-year old has already remarked, "Even I can understand it."

R. S. R. F.

WILD ENCOUNTERS. By EILEEN A. SOPER. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 25s.

There are some books which, for one reason or another, maybe the charm of their writing, or their sincerity, or for