



Libyan jirds, drawing by John Busby reproduced from 'Azraq: Desert Oasis'

vegetation and ecology of the area, but has excellent chapters on adaptation to desert living, and the relation of the human settlements and inhabitants to their harsh environment. He went out in 1968 to start a research station linked with the International Biological Program, and it is sad indeed that the gale of war that blew through the Middle East swept away this promising beginning. His chapter on this tentative start and decisive end, when various kinds of Arab military understandably refused to accept a civilian scientist from overseas in what had become one of their most important staging posts, will be read with the greatest interest by all those who, in the past or in the future, have been or will be concerned with the setting up of that most rewarding type of enterprise, an international biological research station. So far, only the Charles Darwin Station in the Galapagos has really worked, but it is clear that, but for the chances of war, such was the excellent cooperation of the Jordan authorities, ever prodded by the indefatigable Max Nicholson, Azraq would have had an excellent chance of working too.

John Busby's distinctive and helpful drawings of birds and mammals and Eric Hosking's fine photographs both help to make this a first-class book.

RICHARD FITTER

The National Parks of England and Wales, by Roger Bush.
Dent, £3.95.

Roger Bush is a tonic. There were the rest of us thinking evil thoughts about our national parks, worrying that mining excavators were about to scoop great holes in them, wondering about the legislation and even doubtful whether they should be called national parks. But Mr Bush waves a hand airily over such thinking, consenting that some 'disadvantages' have arisen from the 'compromise solutions' of the Parks Act, but adds that the 'parks have achieved a good deal' and have 'considerable merits'.

We wonder what on earth we have been worrying about. We may have tied ourselves in knots, particularly after a frustrating visit to a park, but Mr Bush's comforting tone should unravel our cares at once. For example: 'When an area is selected as a national park there is no change in the ownership of land. Nor is there any special right of access for walkers, climbers or riders, or for picnicing'. The facts are plain. He is calm about them and yet obviously loves the parks. So why fret a moment longer?

The bulk of the book is balm of a different kind, with 120 photographs showing some of the considerable beauty within the park areas. The text is factual stuff about each region, with history and anecdote, geology and helpful hints. It is a sensible, intelligent guide to the many virtues of these different places (Mr Bush having served as head of publicity at the Countryside Commission). The book is a brochure more than an examination, and public relations more than a private enquiry. It is always wrong to suggest that any book should have been a quite different kind of book, but I fell upon this volume eagerly and then retreated. Money, for

example, is crucial to the parks' well-being. They must have more than the pittance they currently receive. But neither the word nor the subject despoils these pretty pages.

ANTHONY SMITH

Whales, Dolphins and Man, by Jacqueline Nayman. Hamlyn, £1.95.

This is a clear, fascinating and eminently readable account of all facets of cetology, extremely informative, and a real bargain, with no fewer than 88 interesting photographs in colour and black and white as well as numerous line drawings. In addition to a lucid chapter on the biology and evolution of cetaceans, there is an intriguing section on the myths about dolphins, including numerous stories about friendly dolphins coming to the aid of stranded or drowning people—one could wish that mankind would play the cetaceans the same compliment.

The antics of the early whalers—when the contest between man and whale was more equal—are fascinating, but the section on modern whaling makes depressing reading. Jacqueline Nayman is understandably pessimistic about the whales' chances of survival. She aptly points out that 'the information on sightings comes in the main from the crews of the whaling vessels who are bound to be biased, and, what is more, are likely to be in the seas where the greatest numbers of whales are to be found'. She concludes with the hope that 'where the scientists have failed public opinion may persuade the whalers to spare the great whales for posterity'. Let us hope that her book helps to do just that.

ANGELA KING

They Rode into Europe, by Miklos Jankovich, translated by Anthony Dent. Harrap, £4.50.

This is an English edition of a book written in Hungarian and first published in German in 1968 under the title *Pferde, Reites, Völkerstürme*. The translator, himself an expert on horse lore, has inserted observations in the text which form a sort of running dialogue with the author and add both interest and value.

In his preface the author tells us that, availing himself of material accumulated over centuries in Hungarian archives, he is setting out to elucidate 'those developments in the history of mankind which led in Europe to travel on horseback and to mounted warfare . . . (and) enabled the Eurasians to travel overland from the Atlantic to the Pacific seaboard of the Old World'.

His insistence is that the 'Turanian' or 'Bactrian' horse is the source, by diffusion, of most of the elegant horse-breeds of the modern world, from the Arabian contributor to the English racehorse, to the 'heavenly horses' that play their part in Chinese history and art. The opening section, dealing with the horse ancestral to domestication, is the weakest part, inclining to the conventional speculation about two *ur*-forms of wild primitive—a 'cold-blood' and a 'hot-blood'—for which the evidence is quite insufficient, and underestimating the available length of time and possibilities of prior differentiation by horse-users breeding before these two categories appeared. The later part, comprising the bulk and essential matter of the book, and assembling rich material in quotation, anecdote and illustration through early historical and recent times, is invaluable, shedding light, as the author claims, on all manner of episodes in the development and movements of peoples in the area. Perhaps not over-expensive—the book comprises only