

Book reviews

keep up to date with books about Borneo written by modern 'adventurers', I have come to the conclusion that what makes so much of modern Borneana maddening is that the authors never seem to stay long enough to gain any real understanding of the place, and they usually appear to be under the erroneous impression that they are pioneering new ground. How refreshing, then, that Oxford University Press has decided to reprint the works of two old 'Borneo hands' who really were pioneers! Carl Bock's *The Head-Hunters of Borneo* is in many ways the direct forerunner of the modern works, since it is the tale of a culturally arrogant European's adventurous wandering in Borneo and Sumatra, but written at a time when it really was rather original to do that sort of thing.

Bock's arrogant tendencies culminated for me in some hilarious diplomacy in which he does the local equivalent of a hypothetical, helpful Asian tourist making an Ulster Loyalist and an IRA leader hold hands while he tells them in broken English not to fight.

But Bock's volume is fascinating and well written. He took much new information to Europe, his illustrations are excellent, and he took the trouble to append species lists of molluscs and birds. He even managed to deliver several new species to Europe, in spite of the loss of 571 bird specimens in the Red Sea when a steamer sank.

I liked Bock's book, but I don't think I'd have much liked Bock himself. Charles Hose, on the other hand, comes across on every page as a fascinating, enthusiastic, but modest, raconteur. I suspect that many of his stories were first told over a gin-and-bitters, perhaps on some verandah in Kuching as the sun went down behind Gunung Serapi. I wish I'd been there. Even when he insults my adopted relatives, the Kelabits, it's possible to laugh.

Strangely, for such an eminent naturalist, Hose commits a few zoogeographical blunders—like placing the lion-tailed macaque in Sarawak—and as a source of biological information, he is best read critically. I kept Smythies' *Birds of Borneo*† and Payne, Francis and Phillipps' *Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo** to hand, both for cross-checking and for the maps that OUP foolishly fail to provide in Hose's book.

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Bock's and Hose's works are essential reading for anyone with an interest in the people or natural history of Borneo. Somehow, to present them in paperback does not do them justice, so I heartily recommend the hardback versions to be treasured in collector's libraries.

*Payne, J., Francis, C. and Phillipps, K. 1985. *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Borneo*. The Sabah Society, Kota Kinabalu.

†Smythies, B.E. 1981. *Birds of Borneo*. Third edition, revised by the Earl of Cranbrook. The Sabah Society with the Malayan Nature Society, Kota Kinabalu.

Michael Kavanagh, World Wildlife Fund Malaysia

The Natural History of Orkney

R. J. Berry

Collins, New Naturalist Series, 1985, 304 pp, SB £9.95, HB £20

The Northern Isles of Scotland are very special for wildlife and scenery, enhanced by an exciting history and friendly people. The differences between Orkney and Shetland make a visit north even more interesting to the visiting naturalist. Professor Berry's new book on Orkney complements his earlier *New Naturalist*, *The Natural History of Shetland*, written with Laughton Johnston. He has had the benefit of a group of Orkney experts, some of whom have helped write specific chapters.

The Natural History of Orkney runs to 304 pages. The introductory chapter on the islands, weather and people is followed by detailed chapters on biological history, geology, habitats and vegetation. Most of Orkney's nearly 100 islands are very low-lying with impressive sandy beaches and strands, so a chapter on sea and shore followed by one on otters, seals and whales is very appropriate. It is also a land of freshwater lochs with excellent trout fishing and abundant wildfowl in winter. The terrestrial animals include two very special mammals—the Orkney vole and North Ronaldsay sheep.

The islands are very rewarding to the bird-watcher, with many interesting birds, including large seabird colonies and Orkney's special hen harriers, as well as excellent places to observe migrant birds. This subject is fully explored in chapter nine as well as in an up-to-date checklist

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at the end. The final chapters look at Orkney man, both ancient and modern, Orkney naturalists, conservation and the future.

The book is illustrated with 20 fine colour plates and 113 black-and-white photographs and drawings. Much of the scientific fact is presented in 25 tables and 21 appendices of detailed lists of species. A full bibliography is included.

All in all, this is an excellent book of high scientific standard, and is good value for money. Required reading for naturalists interested in Orkney and a really valuable companion to any visitor to the islands. I'm sure it will enhance many a journey.
Roy Dennis, Highlands Officer of the Royal Society for Protection of Birds, Inverness, UK.

Insects, birds and mammals: some recent fieldguides and handbooks

A Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain, Europe and North Africa

J. d'Aguilar, J.-L. Dommangeat and R. Prechat
Collins, 1986, 336 pp, HB £14.95

A handbook as well as a fieldguide, it is probably not very helpful to the absolute novice, but is essential reference for the rapidly increasing number of dragonfly-watchers. Keys, drawings, photographs and detailed descriptions are combined to make collecting obsolete.

A Field Guide to the Caterpillars of Butterflies and Moths in Britain and Europe

D. J. Carter and B. Hargreaves
Collins, 1986. 296 pp, HB £9.95

The problem of where to begin in identifying lepidopteran larvae has been partially solved by placing almost as much emphasis on the food plant as on the caterpillar itself. It is certainly up to the standard expected of a Collins Guide, with 500 caterpillars, food plants, and 300 adults illustrated.

Shore Birds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World

Peter Hayman, John Marchant and Tony Prater
Croom Helm, Beckenham, Kent, 1986. 412 pp, HB £19.95

A 'tour-de-force', which should enable most
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waders in most parts of the world to be identified. The precision of Peter Hayman's technique is ideal for waders, and the comprehensive descriptions and maps are presented clearly and lucidly. Remarkable value, and complements Croom Helm's earlier *Seabirds*. Perhaps in the second edition endangered species could be given some sort of marker to extend its usefulness out of the field into the library? Conservation begins with identification—perhaps identification could end with conservation!

The Mammals of Britain and Europe

Anders Bjarwall and Staffan Ullstrom
Croom Helm Ltd, 1986, HB £15.95

A reasonably priced general handbook with attractive illustrations. However, despite its title, more could have been done to anglicize the Swedish original; for instance, no mention is made of *Crocidura* shrews occurring in the British Isles, or the pelage differences of Irish hares.

Some of the information is also out of date—for instance the Bavarian pine vole may well be extinct, and the house mice are now generally regarded as having more than one species in Europe.

However, overall it is an attractive, useful book, with distribution maps.

John A. Burton

Book service

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