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'sporting' gentlemen, skin and egg collectors and gun-toting naturalists; and, above and beyond all, the continuing 'sterilisation' of natural habitat by modern agriculture.

In a sense it is bleak, if fascinating, reading, but it is balanced by the optimism implied by the title. Birds *have* come back—many of them enticed by the comparative peace (for them!) of the Second World War, and increasingly encouraged by a growing national 'conservation conscience': an improvement which Gooders again sets in its sociological context—the coming of television, the growing influence of the RSPB, and the popularisation of bird-watching. John Gooders says of himself: 'No doubt I'm as guilty as anyone of publicising the bird cause' and yes, I suppose he is often looked on as something of a 'populariser'—but why feel guilty!? If popularisation means conservation, then let's have more of it; and may it rapidly spread to the Mediterranean, where millions of 'our' birds are slaughtered each year.

Meanwhile . . . this book is superbly informative and informed, clear, witty and entirely unemotional. I shall be recommending it and quoting from it often. And by the way, compared with much of Gooders' work, I certainly wouldn't call it 'populist' at all—but 'popular' it should be.

Bill Oddie
Writer and broadcaster

Dynamics of Large Mammal Populations

C.W. Fowler and T.D. Smith (Editors)
Wiley (Interscience), 1981, £31.50

It is the mammals that are large, not the populations—in fact, many of the populations are lamentably small. Because of the long generation time of large-bodied animals, population turnovers are protracted, often exceeding the duration of short-term ecological investigations. Studies of large mammals, therefore, tend to provide information on the current status of particular populations rather than on their rate of change or productivity.

This book rectifies this deficiency. It comprises the published proceedings of a conference held at Utah State University in 1978, and includes 23

papers presented by 35 authors. Its main theme is the modelling of animal populations and how such models can be used both to predict changes in status and to manage populations, particularly of species of commercial value. The book contains an excellent mix of theoretical chapters, general overviews, and studies of specific animal species, ranging from seals and whales to lions and elephants, taking in deer, wolves and grizzly bears on the way.

The book is dedicated to Dr Richard Laws in recognition of his outstanding work on the biology of large mammals during the last 30 years. His chapter comprises a stimulating account of the regulatory processes that influence populations of large mammals in terrestrial and marine ecosystems based upon his personal experiences of seals, whales, hippopotamuses and elephants. Presented as the banquet address at the conference, it is also easily the most readable of the contributions.

And herein lies a warning to the lay reader. The book comprises a collection of scientific papers, chock-a-block with graphs, tables and assorted scientific paraphernalia. Mostly it is heavy, turgid, stuff designed for the serious student of wildlife biology, and is not at all the sort of place to look up the average life expectancy of the African elephant. But to the specialist it will be indispensable, forming as it does the only authoritative volume that deals with the population dynamics of this important group of animals. It is a pity we have had to wait so long for the conference proceedings to see the light of day, and then at a price few can afford.

Robin Pellew
Physiological Laboratory,
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Collins Handguide to the Butterflies of Africa

R.H. Carcasson
Collins, 1981, HB £7.95, PB £4.95
The Butterflies of Northern Europe
Björn Dal (Michael Morris, Editor)
Croom Helm, 1982, £5.95

These two handy guides are a welcome addition to the ever-increasing volume of publications

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designed to assist the international traveller in the identification of wildlife. Both books live up to the high standard that has generally been set in recent years and have been most attractively produced. They make an interesting contrast, for the authors have taken very different approaches to their subjects.

The African continent boasts more than 3000 species of butterflies, to say nothing of the subspecies and numerous polymorphic butterflies which have evolved different mimetic or seasonal forms. To produce a comprehensive field guide would therefore be a highly ambitious undertaking. Dr Carcasson, lately director of the National Museum in Nairobi, has sensibly set himself modest aims. He describes his guide as being no more than an introduction to the study of African butterflies. He has illustrated 354 species representing the larger genera, the commonest and most widely distributed species, and the largest and most conspicuous by reason of their behaviour etc. (There is a hardback edition which includes a list of all the species and subspecies known to occur in the Afrotropical Region.)

Dr Carcasson has illustrated the book himself from set specimens in the British Museum (Natural History) and his artistic talents are remarkable. His beautifully painted butterflies are a delight to the eye. He has been particularly skilful in the way he has captured the elusive quality of many of the species displaying iridescent colours. A few illustrations of larvae and pupae representing characteristic species from most families give one some idea of the remarkable forms and extraordinary diversity present in the early stages of the Lepidoptera. There are useful notes in the introduction describing mimicry, polymorphism, interesting butterfly behaviour and helpful cross-references in the species list to aid one in sorting out mimics and models.

This splendid book will certainly achieve its aim in stimulating people's interest in the great richness, variety and beauty of African butterflies. Hopefully, some will be encouraged to devote time to their serious study, for much still remains to be learnt about their biology and behaviour.

Whereas Dr Carcasson has illustrated his book in the conventional way with set specimens, Björn

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Dal, in his *Butterflies of Northern Europe*, edited by Michael Morris, has depicted the butterflies in their natural environment. The result is a most attractive book filled with delicately executed illustrations. It includes all the species regularly found in Britain and Northern Europe, but excludes 'high arctic' butterflies not often found below the Arctic Circle.

Instead of being arranged systematically, the butterflies have been grouped according to their usual habitats. This system has the advantage in enabling readers to identify species from amongst a relatively small number, rather than having to plough through pages of similar types. On the other hand, the book originated in Scandinavia and this may lead to some confusion in other geographical regions. For instance, *Argynnis paphia*, the silver-washed fritillary, is listed under meadowland and marshes, whereas in Britain it is usually associated with woodlands. Michael Morris's edited text has been expressly written for British readers and helps to overcome this problem. There are also distribution maps for each species.

The Butterflies of Northern Europe will be most useful for beginners and for those visiting Scandinavia or wishing to broaden their knowledge of European Lepidoptera beyond the shores of Britain.

Robin Crane
Robin Crane Films

W.H. Hudson, a biography

Ruth Tomalin

Faber & Faber, 1982, £13.50

A biography of Hudson is a daunting task. The main reason is that much of his writing is autobiographical but apart from his own writings, there is very little material upon which to base accounts of the early parts of his life. Ruth Tomalin has attempted this difficult task and the result is readable if a little pedestrian. However, I do wonder if at times she accepts Hudson's accounts of his early life a little too readily; after all he was usually writing decades later and even if the overall memories are accurate I wonder how precise the chronological details are.

Ruth Tomalin's book provides a work of reference for the Hudson *aficionado* which has long