

The reptiles and amphibia (Arnold and Gallagher) are listed and discussed, and many entries under species contain interesting notes on behaviour. Affinities are also discussed. The geckoes (E. N. Arnold) form an important element of the fauna (30% of all terrestrial reptiles and probably at least 29 species). The morphology and distribution of the freshwater fishes, are described and illustrated by K. E. Banister and M. A. Clarke, the lepidoptera fully described by E. P. Wiltshire, T. B. Larsen contributes a gorgeously illustrated section on the butterflies of Eastern Oman. M. Vachon describes (in French) the three species of scorpions (but no spiders) and K. R. Smythe and M. D. Gallagher ten species of land and freshwater molluscs. The section on plants (J. P. Mandville), a valuable general introduction to the area and the history of its botanical exploration, is organised in zones (desert parkland, mountain wadis, steep rock slopes etc.) and concludes with a systematic list of all plants collected. And there are some memorable colour photographs.

J. B. NELSON

Les Oiseaux du Zaire, by **Leon Lippens** and **Henri Wille**. Editions Lannoo, Tielt, Belgium, Frs. belg. 3000.

'On ne peut protéger que ce qu'on aime et on ne peut aimer que ce qu'on connaît', writes President Mobutu in a preface to this splendid tome, which should, as the President says is its aim and purpose, make a real contribution to conservation in Zaire. It is published on his authority and with his wholehearted backing, and although produced with a lavishness more typical of a bygone age, and with a 34 × 25-cm format, it is fully up to date in its style and simple, direct approach. The 509 pages allow on average about a third of a page to each of the 1086 species recorded in Zaire, four of which were added during a year's field work organised for the purpose of the book in 1973/74, including the remarkable discovery in the Upemba National Park of the spotted thrush *Turdus fischeri*, previously known from two widely separated localities – on the east coast of Africa and inland only in the extreme south of Malawi. The illustrations, which consist entirely of fully captioned colour photographs, cover 398 species; for some 160 of them two or occasionally three photographs show differences attributable to age, sex or subspecies, birds in flight, or peculiar behaviour, such as the famous symbiosis of pelicans and fishermen. For each of the 1086 species there is also a 4 × 3.5 cm map, in the broad lefthand margin of every page, which may either be of Zaire, to show the distribution of the 27 endemic species (the Congo peacock being the outstanding example), or of the whole of Africa, for the majority of species, or, for more widespread or migratory species, of the appropriate segment of the globe (in which category the information tends rather naturally to be somewhat less reliable).

Within the space available, further reduced by 53 pages of introduction and indices (of the scientific and French names of the birds, only), the authors have done excellently to distil in an average of two or three hundred words, a map and, for about a third of the species, a photograph or two, such evocative and up-to-date (to 1974) accounts of all the species of the richest avifauna of any country of Europe or Africa. Inevitably, perhaps, the content and reproduction of the photographs is rather uneven; most satisfactory on the whole are those taken in their natural habitat, chiefly of larger non-passerines, and often rather distant. Several of these and also particularly the dozen or so landscape photographs illustrating the introductory chapters, are almost breathtakingly good, conveying to perfection the appearance and 'feel' of the major biotopes and their most spectacular birds.

The introductory material contains much of interest and value, including detailed analyses of endemism in the Zairois avifauna, compared with those of other countries or sectors of the Ethiopian region, and of its origins and development in Zaire's particularly favourable environment for evolutionary change.

Cost and size will limit private ownership of this book, but it is to be hoped that it will

find a place on library shelves not only throughout Zaire but far and wide, and thus play the part desired for it: the awakening and encouragement of a widespread desire to conserve as well as to study these 'joys of creation', as the President calls them, the marvellous birds of Zaire and neighbouring countries. So much has still to be learned of them, as the authors aptly say – *in Africa semper aliquid novi*.

H. F. I. ELLIOTT

Ethiopian Wildlands, by **Melvin Bolton**. Collins, £5.50.

Melvin Bolton and his wife were rather suddenly transported from the wilds of Wigan to those of Ethiopia. This was fortunate for the wildlife of Ethiopia, for during his time there he made great additions to the scanty knowledge of many Ethiopian animals and of little-known areas rich in wildlife. And he enjoyed himself thoroughly while he did it.

The book both describes the lighter side of some of his field trips (expeditions would be a better word if the word 'expedite' was not unknown to the Ethiopian vocabulary): the tremendous fun of being stuck in the mud; of mending punctures; of being surrounded, in the back of nowhere, by rifle-armed warriors; of falling into rivers infested with crocodiles; but also the pleasures of watching spectacular assemblies of water birds, finding populations of animals believed almost extinct, and the simple joy of breaking into new country and learning for oneself about the wonderful African animals in their natural habitat. Some solid science is injected into the matrix here and there, in a readable style, but this is essentially an enjoyable book of personal reminiscences about the joys and tribulations of studying wildlife in Ethiopia. As one who has had his fair share of these joys and sorrows, I can endorse the feeling that one gets from the book that the pleasures exceed the pain.

The chapters cover the Rift Valley Labeo area; the plains of Nachisar (one of the last haunts of Swayne's hartebeest); the flood plains of the Baro River; the little-known mountains of the eastern Omo Valley and Lake Stephanie; the magnificent Simien Mountains; the Danakil desert, and the eastern lowlands where he rediscovered populations of typically Somalian animals such as dibatag, Speke's gazelle, and beira. His interest in all things natural is inexhaustible; he is also an excellent photographer, and his pictures, including unique photographs of beira greatly enhance the text. He was fortunate in having a wife who not only tolerated his long trips away from home, but went with him, on the wildest and woolliest of them, to Lake Stephanie, and was perhaps more alarmed by swarms of lake flies than by Hammarkokke riflemen. It is a book thoroughly to be recommended, not only as a vignette of Ethiopian wildlands, but as the personal adventures of a couple of very enterprising young people.

LESLIE BROWN

Terrestrial Environments. Croom Helm, £5.95; **The Desert**. Orbis, £4.95, both by **J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson**.

Professor Cloudsley-Thompson is one of the more prolific of authors, but his book on *Terrestrial Environments* breaks new ground in its comprehensiveness. It is one of his less 'popular' books in that it carries an extensive bibliography and numerous citations in the text. Nevertheless, its greatest appeal will be to the layman; despite its documentation, it is not a book for the professional biologist or even the undergraduate, because its wide scope inevitably leads to superficiality. Most readers will pick up snippets of information that they did not know before, but, judging from the topics that I know best, some recent developments seem to have been omitted. The book starts with good introductory chapters on zoogeography and factors influencing the ecology of animals. Each succeeding chapter deals with a single habitat type, including fresh waters which some might think inappropriate in a book on terrestrial environments. Three final chapters discuss the adaptive significance of morphological features and the interactions between organisms and their environments.