

**Birds of the Antarctic and Sub-Antarctic**, by **George E. Watson** in collaboration with J. Phillip Angle and Peter C. Harper, illustrated by Bob Hines. William Byrd Press, Richmond, Virginia, \$15.

**The Bird Man** by **Ian Strange**. Gordon and Cremonesi, £6.90.

Dr Watson's contribution to the Antarctic Research Series is much more than an identification guide, though it fills that purpose admirably. A pocket-sized handbook of 350 pages, it includes a sixty-page introduction describing the antarctic and sub-antarctic environments in a general way and a geographical section discussing each major land area individually. (A few areas, e.g. the Falkland Islands, are omitted as they have been covered by other publications.) It is packed with aids to identification and information on the birds' biology and distribution – as well as indications of gaps in our present knowledge that need to be filled. There are most useful illustrations in black and white and in colour, together with distribution maps and tables. Any ornithologist visiting these regions, whether expert or amateur, would want the book in his pocket.

In contrast Mr Strange's volume is no scientific handbook: it is a love story. Devoted from childhood to birds and mammals, he had little or no scientific training and simply picked up his knowledge in the field, as an East Anglian farmer. In 1959 he accepted the job of starting a mink farm in the Falkland Islands, where he became captivated by the wildlife and obsessed with the problem of its conservation. He quickly realised both the damage which had already been done and the need for nature reserves if important bird and seal colonies were to survive. Government officials were apparently unsympathetic and indeed uninterested, while he, for his part, had no notion of how to tackle officialdom. He explains that he had to tread on many toes. No doubt the authorities at first thought him to be merely a tiresome and unqualified crank – after all, he had no PhD after his name! In the end he won through by sheer, stubborn persistence but only at the cost of repeated disappointments and much hardship and danger. For nearly 20 years his life was dominated by the passionate promotion of his cause, and this book is the story of his struggles. Eventually, with international support (notably that of the FPS) a considerable measure of success was achieved, and some thirty islands and 'mainland' areas have now been designated as reserves or sanctuaries. (Incidentally, I must contradict his statement that I opposed a WWF proposal for national parks in the Ecuadorean Andes. I was an enthusiastic supporter.) The book is illustrated with the author's photographs and line drawings and with reproductions of his distinctive paintings of birds.

G. T. CORLEY SMITH

**Handbook of North American Birds Vols 2 & 3**, edited by **Ralph S. Palmer**. Yale University Press, £19.80 each vol.

**Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America**, by **Frank C. Bellrose**. Stackpole, \$12.95.

Volume 1 of this major handbook, 'Loons through Flamingos', published in 1962, set a high standard; the two waterfowl volumes, published 14 years later, do not disappoint. They will obviously be compared with Bellrose's book, reviewed below, and with Johnsgard's *Waterfowl of North America* published in 1975. Of the three Palmer includes the greatest number of species (64) and gives the fullest treatment; he has, also, the most extensive cover of the literature and includes a high proportion of references that are not North American. But while the emphasis in Bellrose is on management techniques, and in Johnsgard on behaviour (descriptions of display and breeding habits owe much to studies of captive birds), Palmer uses a more classically 'museum' approach. Very detailed treatment is given to the section on plumages, while