

Book reviews

These two books are very different. The first consists of 17 specialist papers. Some are of immediate conservation interest: disturbance of polar bears, the implications of damming the Slave River, and energy development, tourism and nature conservation in Iceland. Unfortunately, the book has no overview to place these topics in perspective. The coverage is 'western', whereas the second book is 'eastern'. Only one of 58 references cited comes from outside the USSR. It therefore has the particular interest of being based on scientific research which is almost unknown in the West. *The Living Tundra* is an introduction to tundra ecology, with plenty of fascinating information concerning the adaptations by tundra species and their interactions with one another. The final chapter, *Man and the tundra*, shows how easily the ecosystem is damaged, even when human populations are low, and how vulnerable it is to modern exploitation. It concludes with a plea for careful planning, and points out how tampering with the Arctic could dangerously affect the climate of the rest of the world.

Robert Burton, naturalist and author

Birds of Watery Places

The Puffin

M.P. Harris

T. and A.D. Poyser, 1984, £11.60

The Birds of the Wetlands

James Hancock

Croom Helm, 1984, £13.95

Ocean Birds: Their Breeding, Biology and Behaviour

Lars Löfgren

Croom Helm, 1984, £16.95

British ornithologists have a fine reputation for standard monographs of species, beginning as long ago as 1913 with J.H. Gurney on the gannet. Now Mike Harris has added to their number with a first-class study of the Atlantic puffin *Fratercula arctica*, which is not only one of the most photographed birds in the world, but also one of the most researched. This replaces R.M. Lockley's *Puffins*, now more than 30 years old, and should

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hold its place as the standard work until the end of the century. It is a relief, too, to find that he has been able to deal with his subject succinctly, in fewer than 200 pages. There are some excellent black-and-white photographs (though I could not find the photographers' names) and drawings by Keith Brockie.

James Hancock's book is of a very different genre, but one which British ornithologists also do well, the sumptuously illustrated travelogue. His colour photographs of the birds of nine wetland regions around the world are quite superb, and with his predilection for the Ardeidae, he has naturally ensured that herons, egrets and bitterns are well represented. The areas he has visited in all six continents—there are obviously great advantages in choosing the oil industry for your career—include the Everglades, Bharatpur, the South Alligator River and the Coto Donana. Whether you have been there or hope to go there soon, you will treasure this book.

Lars Löfgren's book is again different, being of the illustrated, popular scientific type. It is well designed and deals competently with a wide range of seabird ecology and behaviour. The abundance of magnificent colour photographs and attractive line drawings makes this another most desirable book to possess, but again I could not find out who the photographers are. Is anonymous photography a modern fashion?

Richard Fitter

The Peccaries

Lyle K. Sowls

University of Arizona Press, 1984, \$22.50

By way of introduction, the author states (if somewhat tautologically) that 'the purpose of this book is to bring together in one place most of the existing information on the family Tayassuidae, scant though that may be'. Sowls, who is a noted authority on these animals, comes reasonably close to achieving this objective, although there are a few irksome gaps. The evolutionary history of the group, for example, is treated rather too cursorily, and he offers no treatment whatsoever of the subspecific taxonomy of the dominant genus *Tayassu* (literally 'the gnawer of roots'), which has long been wanting and could, perhaps should, have been usefully included in this book.

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