

The Wild Flower Key, by **Francis Rose**. Warne, £8.95 hardback, £6.25 paperback.

This book describes and illustrates the wild flowers of Britain, northern France, Belgium, Holland, north-west Germany and Denmark; 1400 species are covered, but most grasses, sedges, rushes and critical genera such as *Hieracium* are deliberately omitted. Good keys, clearly set out with the minimum of botanical jargon, help to identify specimens, and there are extra vegetative keys to the non-flowering seed plants of eight well-marked habitats. Over 100 colour illustrations, closely integrated with the text, are all provided with a scale and essential botanical details are often inset.

One can cavil briefly with some technical details: the nomenclature and order is based on that of Clapham, Tutin and Warburg's *Flora of the British Isles* rather than that of the more recent *Flora Europaea*; no authors are cited for the Latin names used; several species, mostly non-British, have been omitted, e.g. *Gypsophila muralis*, *Polygala chamaebuxus*, *Amsinckia* spp. and the western *Asperula occidentalis* – but this work makes no claim to completeness. The vegetative keys are also incomplete; for example *Inula conyza*, *Verbascum nigrum* and *Verbena officinalis* are not included as chalk grassland species, nor is *Barbarea vulgaris* included from roadsides. The colours of perhaps ten per cent of the illustrations are somewhat harsh, perhaps because of the glossiness of the paper used. While the text is notably free from errors and misprints, a purist would object to *Callitriche* being included with the Monocotyledons.

I was surprised to find that only eleven genera – *Hepatica*, *Fumana*, *Chamaespartium*, *Chimaphila*, *Vincetoxicum*, *Globularia*, *Arnica*, *Helichrysum*, *Anthericum*, *Asphodelus* and *Limodorum* – have no British species in the large area covered, which does not include the Alps. Clearly a good knowledge of the British Flora is a great asset in naming plants from north-west Europe. I learned my British plant names some 45 years ago from Macgregor Skene's *Flower Book for the Pocket* which cost 37½p for 380 pages; the present work, at £5.95 for 480 pages, is good value for money.

Dr Rose and his illustrators deserve our congratulations for their skill in compressing so much accurate information into a relatively small compass.

HUMPHRY BOWEN

Mountain Wildlife, by **Richard Perry**. Croom Helm, £6.95.

Each of the 24 chapters of this book is an essay on the wildlife of a particular mountain region, such as British Uplands, Alps, Himalaya, Tibet, Rockies, Andes. The essays are literary rather than strictly scientific, often giving a general picture of the habitat, including landscape, climate and geology as well as vegetation, birds, mammals and insects. Even when a chapter is nominally devoted to a single species, such as the marmot or the markhor, the author is happy to include any related material that he has culled from the stories of mountaineers and naturalists, often quoting his sources at length. Inevitably most of the information is second-hand, as no naturalist, not even so great a mountain explorer as Eric Sipton, has covered all this territory.

Mr Perry is on firmer ground in the Cairngorms, which he knows, than in the Andes, where his accounts of the wildlife are somewhat impressionistic, especially when he tries to encompass in a single essay the cordillera from Venezuela to Chile and from cloud forest to páramo and ice peak, with all the enormous differences due to latitude and altitudinal zones. Some of his statements about the equatorial Andes surprised the present reviewer who spent several years there. For instance, without citing any source, he makes the astonishing assertion that on Chimborazo 'a humming-bird' (unspecified but, from the context, not *Oreotrochylus chimborazo*) 'exists as high as 20,000 feet'. The chapters covering Asia and North America seem much better documented. However, this is not a scientific treatise, and those who love mountains will find both good descriptive writing and copious data about life in high places.

G.T. CORLEY SMITH