

times in a continent which did not come within the field of Western man's activity until late. The value of this natural inheritance is immense not only for science, but also in man's own interest (notably as a gene pool of potentially useful plants, and for the preservation of specialised ecosystems well suited to local conditions). Particularly in South America man has to respect a delicate natural balance; the geographical and physical conditions are such that he cannot count on a lasting economic success if the unity and diversity of this vast area are not kept in view. Thus these two volumes, important as a source of scientific references, are also a remarkable contribution to the conservation of a continent on which a natural balance can still be saved.

JEAN DORST

**A Guide to the Pheasants of the World, by Philip Wayre.** Country Life, 63s.

**Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, by Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley.** Vol. 3, Stone Curlews to Owls. O.U.P., £6.

The pheasants, being handsome birds, attractive to artists and their patrons, have been monographed before, most sumptuously by Beebe forty years ago, more modestly by Jean Delacour twenty years later. But both these substantial and expensive works are becoming out of date, so no further justification is needed for Philip Wayre's useful new guide, admirably illustrated in colour by J. C. Harrison. Links with the Delacour volume are strong. Not only is the artist the same, but Jean Delacour himself provides a foreword, as President of the Pheasant Trust (formerly the Ornamental Pheasant Trust), of which the author is Hon. Director, and the author acknowledges his permission to use descriptions and other material from the earlier work—all authors stand on their predecessors' shoulders, but not all are polite enough to acknowledge the fact. The result is a fine book which brings our knowledge of the pheasants up to date more succinctly—176 instead of 351 pages—and is easier on the pocket. Fifteen of the 48 species in the book are in the Red Data Book of Endangered Species, an unenviable record that can hardly be equalled by any other group, except perhaps the parrots, and the author chronicles the efforts of the Pheasant Trust to save many of these species by breeding them in captivity and returning them to the wild.

Volume three of Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley takes us nearly to the end of the non-passerines, covering the thick-knees, coursers and pratincoles, skuas (an odd group to find in the Indian avifauna, but they are great wanderers), gulls and terns, sandgrouse, pigeons and doves, parrots and owls, maintaining the high scholarly standards of the two previous volumes. One looks forward eagerly to the completion of one of the great standard avifaunas of our time. India is succeeding where North America has fallen at the first fence, no second volume for that continent yet having appeared to join the first issued in 1962. Those of us at the recent New Delhi IUCN Conference who saw the two authors driving together in the same stately motor car, feared lest some reckless driver, in a sub-continent of alarming driving standards, should deprive us of both authors at one go. Having survived this hazard, I am sure they will go on to a triumphant conclusion.

RICHARD FITTER

*The Avifauna of Northern Latin America*, by Helmut K. and Jimmie H. Buechner (Smithsonian Institution, \$3.25), is the proceedings of a conference held in 1966 to assess the conservation of birds migrating between North and South America.