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great credit for the support they have given during the past 50 years to the concept of conservation in the Galapagos. They have been very conscious of being the guardians of a major element in the world's scientific heritage, and ensured that the islands were among the first four World Heritage sites. Their partnership with the international scientific community, as Corley Smith points out, is unique, just as the islands themselves are in many ways unique.

Altogether the book provides a most valuable summary of the history, natural history, ecology and conservation of the Galapagos, and is now the essential reference book on the islands.

Richard Fitter, Council Member, Charles Darwin Foundation

The Macmillan Guide to Britain's Nature Reserves

Jeremy Hywel-Davies and Valerie Thom
Macmillan, London, 1984, £30.00

Recent surges of interest in natural history have tempted many British publishers to flood the market with ill-conceived or redundant books not properly covering their purported fields and executed well below the professional standards that sophisticated readers are entitled to expect. One result has been a lack of funding adequate to do each job properly. Perhaps lessons are being learnt, and we can be glad to find here a real major need correctly assessed and competently filled at a price that, high as it may seem, gives good value. Covering some 2000 sites of wildlife interest to which the public have some form of access in England, Wales, and Scotland, it gives for each basic factual information on location, area, management, character, restrictions, available publicity and best seasons to visit. This is followed by at least a few lines of description of a creditably succinct and accurate form, accompanied by well-chosen pictures in colour and black-and-white, some of the former even greener than their natural subjects! Each county or region has a preface by a locally knowledgeable naturalist briefly reviewing its distinctive features, and a map, some of which are less informative than others.

As a comprehensive major work of reference this

merits a place in any good library, and although inevitably a bit heavy will be a valuable companion in travel. It is almost too thoroughly indexed—there are over 300 page references to oak alone—and has a useful glossary and address list of organisations. Apart from its value for reference at all levels, both in the library and in the field, it will be helpful even to those who are expertly and managerially involved as a conspectus of the present state of play in our impressively successful efforts to multiply the number and coverage of protected sites, and as a guide to the outstanding gaps.

E.M. Nicholson, conservationist and author

Enjoying Ornithology: A Celebration of Fifty Years of the British Trust for Ornithology 1933–1983

Edited and compiled by Ronald Hickling
T. and A.D. Poyser, Calton, 1983, £13.00

Anyone who is interested in birds eventually reaches the point when he or she joins the BTO, or loses enthusiasm. The Trust has after its first 50 years involved itself in every aspect of ornithology, simply because as the supreme shepherd of this pervasive occupation it has enabled the birdwatcher to expand his or her enjoyment. It has done this by supplying him or her with the motivation and the methodology to keep records, and by applying those records in enlightened ways to reveal trends and changes in the status of birds in Britain.

From the contributions of many writers, Ronald Hickling has most smoothly contrived a clear and logical history of a half-century in which the science of ornithology has advanced at an astonishing rate. Max Nicholson's story of the BTO's birth is followed by Robert Spencer's assessment of its current role. Each of the Trust's major surveys is described in terms of its contribution to ecological knowledge and of its relevance to birdwatching as purely a hobby. In 'Our Changing Avifauna' the origins and status of Britain's bird life are a source of fascination exceeded only by the excitement of anticipating its future; this chapter, too, is by Robert Spencer, surely now the most skilful communicator of all writers about birds.

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Space does not allow the deserved mention of all the contributors whose effective writings have presented a flawless account of birds and their watchers. The reader will enjoy this book; but, more importantly, he or she will identify and understand countless ways of enjoying birds.

That this remarkable book is now being offered free to new BTO members makes it the most sumptuous and enticing recruitment brochure in the history of this or any other of man's obsessions.

Crispin Fisher, *Natural History Editor, Wm Collins, Sons and Co.*

Our Wildlife in Peril

Endangered Species Committee of the Total Environment Centre

A.H. and A.W. Reed, Pty Ltd, Sydney, 1983, £12.95, A\$19.95

This useful book surveys Australia's endangered species (and subspecies), stating where each lives and why it is endangered. It is well printed and attractively organised, and Dorothy Dunphy's black-and-white drawings are both accurate and aesthetically pleasing.

For most of us, a phrase such as 'wildlife in peril' conjures up pictures of rhinos and condors; the incorporation of '... and Flora' into our society's name forces us to bethink ourselves of redwoods as well. Though dealing with animals only, it is one of the benefits of this book that it goes beyond mammals and birds, and has sections on reptiles, amphibians and fish too, and even has a go at listing endangered invertebrates. As the text acknowledges, 'Most invertebrates are endangered to the extent that their habitat is endangered' (page 156), and despite the existence of the bush vandal crowd, who delights in killing for its own sake, in Australia as everywhere else, this comment could very largely be taken to apply to all animals.

Inevitably, errors and gremlins have crept in; mostly not very serious ones, though. On page 34 you will find it stated that the last known thylacine (Tasmanian 'wolf' or 'tiger') died in Hobart Zoo in 1934. There is in fact no Hobart Zoo; a private collection, known as Beaumaris Zoo, was taken over by Hobart City Council on its owner's death

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in 1921, and there died the last thylacine, two years later than the book says (on 7 September 1936). One other deficiency, at least, turns out not to be the compilers' fault: on page 38 you will find '*Petrogale* sp. undescribed, proserpine rock-wallaby': this species was in fact described in a paper by Maynes dated 10 May 1982, as *Petrogale persephone* (and a highly distinctive, as well as highly endangered, species it is). It has been explained to me that, though the book was published late last year, it had been ready for the press long before that, but was delayed by the vicissitudes of publishing during which no updatings could be made. What a pity: a conservation book, above all, should be bang up to date.

The non-Australian conservationist will find much of interest here. The devastation wreaked by introduced species has been astounding: so many formerly widespread species have been swept off their entire mainland ranges by competition from the introductions, surviving only if their ranges happened to include offshore islands which were not reached by rabbits, hares, foxes, feral cats, introduced rats and mice, goats, donkeys, horses, camels, buffaloes, sparrows, starlings, blackbirds. . . The distribution maps in the book make this quite clear: look at the map on page 57 for *Leporillus conditor*, the greater stick-nest rat, with its vast 'former range' a shadowy grey, and a tiny orange spot to indicate Franklin Island where 1000 or so survive; and then look on the next page for the map of the lesser stick-nest rat, *L. apicalis*, which included no offshore islands in its range—the map has only grey on it. The text perhaps does not make quite enough of this point: although half or more of the species surveys talk of habitat alteration and competition from exotics, the same point could probably be made for every one of them!

The non-Australian, accustomed to thinking of Australian mammals as entirely marsupials and monotremes, will be reminded of the presence of indigenous rodents and bats, and will learn that while neither of the two monotreme species is endangered, proportionally more rodent species than marsupials are in the most highly endangered category.

At the end of the book is a summary chart of