

both the text and most of the plates of an excellent field guide before his premature death at the age of 39. The Pan-American Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation deserves all our thanks for ensuring that they were made available to us.

RICHARD FITTER

**Birds of Moor and Mountain**, by Donald Watson. Scottish Academic Press, £5.50.

To dismiss this handsome volume on outward appearance as yet another of those 'coffee-table' productions in which the text lends only token support to the illustrations would be to do it grave injustice. Factually it is a collection of some fifty short essays in which scholarly research and personal observation, skilfully and pleasingly blended, rank not a whit less in appeal than the generous complement of 38 plates, 25 in colour, and vignettes.

Donald Watson is a talented and highly regarded bird artist; he is moreover—as this work shows—not only a first-rate field naturalist and an acute observer but also a writer who can conjure, vividly and with brevity and a happy choice of phrase, an evocative word picture. Take, for example, his description of the whinchat, 'one moment almost impossibly upright and streamlined, the next wind-blown and crouching, then tall again with bill pointed downward as if the bird were contemplating its own toes'. The moorland, open country and wetlands of Galloway, the artist's home, provide the background for many of his pictures. Some of his most memorable paintings have been of water birds, perhaps especially of ducks and geese and notably when portrayed in a wintry setting—or is this just a personal predilection? Certainly, in this book I have found the pictures of the pair of goosanders (Plate 10) and of the Greenland white-fronts (Plate 5) quite the most satisfying.

W. J. EGGELING

**The Asiatic Wild Horse**, by Dr Erna Mohr, translated by D. M. Goodall. J. A. Allen, £2.50.

This excellent and invaluable small book surveys the whole field of facts about the Mongolian wild horse, which the specialists have now decided to be the best name for *Equus p. przewalskii*. Dr Mohr died in 1968 while the second German edition of *Das Urwildpferd* was being prepared, and the revision has been completed by Dr Jiri Volf of the Prague Zoo. These two, respectively founder and present keeper of the famous studbook that annually records the entire captive stock of these creatures, even now only so doubtfully surviving in the wild, have been in a better position than anyone to give us such an account—I almost wrote 'straight from the horse's mouth'.

The chapters cover the animal's possible relationships to the domestic horse and to primeval horses, its distribution—formerly and today—the importation of the original captures from which present zoo stocks are descended, the great deal that has become known of their appearance (and its many variations) and habits under captivity, and the little that is known of its biology in the wild. The main contentious questions, such as its affinities and best classification, are treated fairly, if not quite exhaustively, and a useful bibliography is provided, all in the tight compass of 124 pages, richly illustrated with 100 black and white photographs. The book is indispensable to those interested in the animal, and should also interest those whose concern with horses is more general.

The translation would, no doubt, not be so clearly informative if it had not been made by a translator with so patent a love of the subject and so