

deserving to be hanged and quartered in having given us no index for a name-filled, species-filled and fact-filled book.

There are all manner of lovely snippets. I had not known that the first great American ornithologist (Wilson) and the foremost American bird artist (Audubon) both recorded two species that have never been seen by anyone else; or that Audubon left off a title page for *Birds of America* in order not to have to send nine copies free to British libraries; or that Henry VII had a parrot who called 'Twenty pounds for a boat' after falling into the Thames, but changed, after rescue, to 'Give the knave a groat'. There were many more that caused me to laugh, or be intrigued, or just be fascinated as some previous mystery was explained, but it will take too long to dig them out without that wretched index. However, you will find them sure enough when you read this excellent piece of work.

ANTHONY SMITH

**The Natural History of the Garden, by Michael Chinery.** Collins, £4.50.

Thousands of naturalists travel to far places to see plants and animals. How many give a second thought to what lives in their own gardens? This book is a fascinating compendium of information on the wildlife of the garden, lucid and readable, and illustrated with numerous good, often excellent, colour plates.

The author takes us down the plant groups from flowering plants through mosses and lichens to fungi, and up through the animal groups from earthworms to mammals. The longest chapter, nearly a third of the book, is devoted to insects, and because there are so many, parts of it read like an annotated catalogue, though it is better on the less well known insect groups. With other invertebrate animals, such as slugs, snails and spiders, the author had more space to devote to their biology and life histories. The book should do a lot to redress the balance of opinion in favour of animals normally regarded as undesirable, such as woodlice, earwigs, millipedes and centipedes.

There are some irritating errors and inconsistencies: the author seems unable to decide whether to use common or Latin names or both; most of the plates have no scale—very misleading when comparing different insects; references to plates in the text are careless, for instance some bees are named in Latin in the text and English in the plate, and unless one knows them already they are difficult to match up.

This is a book to delight naturalists and open their eyes to a world of interest at their own back doors. It is in a long tradition of well informed popular natural history, and will teach many people about creatures they often overlook or even despise. Strongly recommended.

S. R. J. WOODSELL

**The World of a Mountain, by William Condry.** Faber, £3.50.

**The World of an Island, by Philip Coxon,** Faber. £3.25.

**Ponds: their wildlife and upkeep, by Robert Burton.** David & Charles, £3.95.

This splendid introduction to the ecology of British mountains is aimed primarily at young people but could be read with profit and pleasure by adult general readers. The author conducts the reader from the valley through the broad-leaved woodland and conifers of the lower slopes to the grassland zone, past peat-bogs and heather moors to the summit, pointing out the characteristic plants and animals of each zone. He gives a salutary warning of the pressures caused by increasing numbers of walkers and climbers on high level habitats and their wildlife. His final section suggests projects for young people. The author's photographs and Wilhelmina Guymers's line drawings richly enhance the text, and there are lists of helpful books and useful addresses.

*The World of an Island* deals specifically with North Uist, the 'great bowl of watery desolation', in the Outer Hebrides or Western Isles, where the author was warden of the RSPB's Balranald bird reserve. He describes the geology, climate and wildlife, especially the abundant and varied bird life, with interesting information on the 500 red deer and the grey and common seal populations. The last section is an account of the