



a short but comprehensive and interesting account of the islands' wildlife aimed at young people, and profusely illustrated with the author's photographs (Dodd, Mead & Co, \$4.00).

of course, has been to make it possible for large populations of wild animals to exist near human habitations. The Russians have succeeded in building up large populations of the saiga antelope in the region between the Volga and the Urals where the human population is 'four times as dense as in Asia'. In India the blackbuck *Antilope cervicapra* has been largely exterminated because of its conflict with agricultural interests extending into marginal areas. It would be worthwhile returning marginal lands to wildlife, and restraining humanity from colonising unsuitable habitats.

One of the great problems of the world is the maldistribution of water in terms of both space and time. Floods alternate with droughts with alarming frequency. To the layman the creation of large dams appears to be a sensible solution, but the ecological disasters which have flowed from the Aswan Dam, for example, suggest that smaller irrigation schemes which do not alter the balance of nature so radically are a preferable alternative.

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

Les mammifères de France et du Benelux, by M.-C. Saint Girons. Doin, Paris, frs 138.00.

The French have a long tradition of interest in the study of mammals, but from the days of Buffon and Cuvier onwards exotic species have tended to attract attention at the expense of the native fauna. In recent years however the name of Madame Marie-Charlotte Saint Girons has become familiar to readers of the technical literature as the author of numerous papers on the ecology and taxonomy of mammals in France, based on studies carried out at the Ecological Laboratory of the National Museum of Natural History. It is particularly pleasing therefore to have a book dealing with all the non-marine mammals of France from such an experienced author.

Each species is illustrated by a simple line drawing or a photograph (but the photograph purporting to be of harvest mouse appears to be a wood mouse) and drawings of the skull. The text is concise but comprehensive, drawing extensively on recent work, taxonomic and ecological, from all parts of Europe. Particularly valuable are the distribution maps, given for all but the ubiquitous species. Some rather strange patterns emerge. The map for European mink is a cumulative one, including records presumably dating back to the beginning of the century, but even then it appears to have been confined to the western part of the country, widely separated from its main stronghold in Eastern Europe. The species appears to have inclined

drastically, but little is known of its present status and no information is provided as to the interaction, if any, between the native mink and feral American mink.

A great deal of interesting work is currently being published on the mammals of Europe but the task of synthesising it is complicated by the multiplicity of nations and languages. This compilation, being competent, well balanced and up to date, will therefore be relevant and welcome beyond the confines of France.

G. B. CORBET

Charles Waterton's Wanderings in South America, edited by Gilbert Phelps. Charles Knight, £4.

Waterton was a splendid eccentric—perhaps the French *un original* describes him better. He made his Yorkshire estate into a 19th century precursor of Minsmere. He experimented with the poison *curare*. He rode on the back of an alligator he wanted to capture uninjured. During the Napoleonic era and the Spanish–American Wars of Liberation he spent years in the wild country between the Orinoco and the Amazon, always with a keen eye and an insatiable curiosity for every aspect of nature. The oddities of his style will not appeal to everyone, particularly his tiresome discourses to the ‘kind and gentle reader’ and his addiction to Latin tags, while his stubborn refusal to use scientific names is only redeemed by the glossary compiled by David Snow.

Waterton's contributions to taxidermy and his original zoological discoveries were long ago absorbed into the general body of scientific knowledge. What makes his narratives still readable is the personality of the author, endearing and infuriating, that emerges on every page.

G. T. CORLEY SMITH

A Field Guide to the Insects of Britain and Northern Europe, by Michael Chinery. Collins, £2.95.

Studying Insects—a practical guide, by R. L. E. Ford. Warne, £2.50.

This field guide attempts the daunting task of helping the beginner to learn something about insects, their structure, their classification and their life histories. It includes workable keys to the insect groups, and the confirmed lepidopterist will discover almost for the first time what structural features are used to separate the major groups of moths and butterflies. There are 60 colour plates and many line drawings, a ten-page glossary and five pages of selected bibliography listing books which take the matter further. For its price it is very good value, and schools and university students as well as amateur naturalists who collect will find it extremely helpful to have illustrated keys to insect orders and families and good enlarged colour pictures of so many common British insects. The end papers have colour pictures with reference numbers to the plates where other related insects can be found. Whether ‘Northern Europe’ correctly indicates the habitat of the foreign insects illustrated is more open to doubt—many of them seem to be Mediterranean, but this is not a disadvantage. The book has been prepared with very great care, has very few (mostly trivial) typographical errors, and should be very attractive to a wide public.

The second book claims to be a fully revised edition of ‘Practical Entomology’ (1963) but many mistakes remain unchanged. It is a chatty