

evolved within no more than a few thousand years.

The whole is a fitting monument to the author's erudition, industry and gift for integrating complex evidence of different kinds; it is thought-provoking in high degree and will long remain a most valuable source book.

A. LANDSBOROUGH THOMSON

Tibet and Its Birds, by **Charles Vaurie**. Witherby, £10.50.
Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, Vols. 5 and 6, by
Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. OUP, £8 each.

Birds of Guatemala, by **Hugh C. Land**. Livingston,
 Wynnewood, Pa, \$10.00.

Although bird books continue to pour from the presses, there remains one huge blank, where we know almost nothing of the bird life today: China. It is therefore especially valuable to have a book on a small part of that huge and ornithologically almost unknown country, Tibet. Its avifauna is about as different from the only other part of China we know about, Hong Kong, as you would expect from the remoteness of the two. Charles Vaurie, of the American Museum of Natural History, is well known as the author of the standard work on the birds of the Palaearctic. The present volume is on similar lines, only in more detail, that is to say it covers only taxonomy and distribution, and not descriptions. The amount of distributional data given for Tibetan birds is, however, very detailed, and indeed almost exhaustive of what is known in the west. In addition there are a number of excellent introductory essays, which amount to a separate book on the geography of Tibet, the history of its ornithological exploration, and the more usual discussion of bird distribution and migration. All this is especially valuable to have about a part of the world that so few westerners are nowadays able to visit. The detailed gazetteer is particularly praiseworthy, and Arthur Singer's three colour plates illustrate some birds it would be hard to find depicted elsewhere.

The great *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* rolls on its majestic way. Shall we again, one wonders, see the like of this stupendous effort by two ornithologists to monograph the avifauna of a subcontinent? The *Birds of the Western Palaearctic* is assembling in the wings, but powered by a much larger team; the similar effort for North America has wilted after a single volume. The best news I have heard for a long time is that the remaining volumes of the Indian Handbook are now all in MS, and await only the ponderously creaking machine of modern publishing to process them.

The first four volumes have already been reviewed in *ORYX* (Dec. 1969, Sept. 1970, May 1971), and little more need be said but that these further two maintain the same high standard, both in text and illustrations, and that all those concerned with Indian ornithology are increasingly impatient to have the full set on their shelves. These two cover the larks, swallows, shrikes, orioles drongos, wood-swallows, starlings, mynahs, crows and waxwings (vol. 5), and the cuckoo-shrikes, minivets, ioras, bulbuls and babblers (vol. 6). Several of these families, notably the mynahs, minivets, bulbuls and babblers, are particularly characteristic of the Indian avifauna, and accurate and up-to-date information about them is correspondingly valuable.

Guatemala is one of the more favoured Central American countries so far as ornithology is concerned. The fact that so able an ornithologist as Jorge Ibarra lives and works there has meant a great encouragement for workers coming from abroad. One of these was the late Hugh Land, who provided

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