

LAST OF THE CURLEWS. By FRED BODSWORTH.
The Museum Press. 10s. 6d.

Six lines under the heading "Accidentals" at the end of Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom's "A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe" describes the eskimo curlew (*Numenius borealis*). The description ends with the words "now virtually extinct". This lovely bird, which had been observed in its thousands by naturalists towards the end of the eighteenth century, was to join those several species which passed from abundance to a state of near or complete annihilation during the last half of the nineteenth century—victims of man's rapacity and love of killing for its own sake. According to L. L. Snyder the last reported sight record of two eskimo curlews was made at Galveston, Texas, on 29th April, 1954. Sergeant Joseph M. Heiser, Jr., reported that he had seen quite plainly what he took to be a mated pair and this was published in the *Auk* an American ornithological journal.

Around these facts and as the fruit of his own long study, Mr. Fred Bodsworth has written *Last of the Curlews*. It is the story of the migration of the last eskimo curlew, from the far north of the Canadian tundra south to Tierra del Fuego and then, the following spring, north again, including its meeting with a mate and the senseless killing of this mate by a Nebraska farmer. The story must, of necessity, be fiction in its details. But so minute is Mr. Bodsworth's observation, so loving and exact his writing, that in its larger aspects it must be true. The book ends on a note of almost unbearable poignancy. It is beautifully written, beautifully illustrated by T. M. Shortt and beautifully produced. It leaves one asking yet again the question—how can man, who is capable of producing, in so many ways, so much beauty, also destroy it so needlessly and wantonly?

M. D.

BEETLES. By Jr. B. BECHYNĚ. Thames and Hudson, 1956.
250 illustrations—48 in colour. 18s.

This book, first published in Germany, has been ably translated by C. M. F. von Hayek for inclusion in a series of Open Air Guides and is intended to help those inclined to an interest in beetles.

A great deal of very useful information on the subject has been packed into the one hundred and fifty odd pages. Many of the larger and more conspicuous British species, as well as a few

found only on the Continent, are described and figured in the several plates, six of which are in colour. The drawings are clear and the colour is on the whole very good. Dichotomous keys, the use of which is explained, together with brief descriptions and the figures, enable the user to determine the identification of many of the species he finds. Chapters on how to collect, with descriptions and figures of apparatus and how to arrange a collection are useful, as are also the chapters dealing with structure, development and ecology. A glossary at the end of the book is helpful while an important feature is a short bibliography pointing to larger standard works on the subject.

To one mildly interested in beetles this volume, which is well bound and printed, will be of use and, may be, will encourage a more serious study of this order of insects.

L. C. B.

THE LONDON ZOO. By PHILIP STREET. Odhams Press. 16s.

Many books have been written about the London Zoo ; but in the reviewer's opinion Mr. Street's is the best of them. It not only deals with the history of what can be justly claimed as the most famous zoo in the world, but it also gives us a series of fascinating stories about the many persons who have contributed to the success of the London Zoo. Nor are the animals themselves neglected.

There are many interesting and amusing anecdotes concerning the inmates of the menagerie, and there is also valuable information about the problems of housing and keeping the many kinds of animals in captivity.

The book is fully illustrated with first-class photographs, and these are not, as so often happens, mere decorations to the book, for each one of them genuinely illustrates some particular point of interest, or some feature of the subject matter. No friend of zoos in general or of the London Zoo in particular should be without a copy of *The London Zoo*.

M. K.