ion volume. The glossy, coffee-table format, handsomely illustrated by Page Chichester's colour photographs, makes a bold platform from which the author surveys some of the key battlegrounds where the fight to save the world's threatened ecosystems is taking place. He takes us to Costa Rica, where the struggle to save the country's rain forests will be won or lost within the next 5 years, and to Africa, where poachers came close to creating the unthinkable – a world without elephants – until the ivory trade was banned. But he is best on his home ground, in the United States, on the vanished prairies, in the forests and canyonlands of the Old West, looking at Yellowstone's trial by fire, at the poisoned shores of San Francisco Bay and the polluted waters of the Great Lakes. Yet DiSilvestro's book with its subtitle – New Hope for Endangered Habitats – is far from being a catalogue of eco-disasters. His message is one of enlightenment and encouragement, a call to arms, setting out practical and sensible remedies for putting our world to rights. At the end of the day, as he rightly reminds us, the fight to save the planet is a battle for hearts and minds. But can it still be won in time?

Brian Jackman

HISTORY

A History of Nature Conservation in Britain by David Evans (Routledge, London, 1992, ISBN 0 415 06653 0, 274 pp., SB £14.99)

David Evans has taken on a remarkably complex task and, while for most purposes he has produced a workmanlike, chronological history, it does suffer from two serious flaws: the lack of people and the lack of an international context.

The natural history conservation movement was, and is, driven by people and without some understanding of those people and the politics of the day, any history is bound to be a rather dry compilation of extracts, summaries and dates. How anyone can write a history of nature conservation in Britain and not mention the driving roles of people like Max Nicholson or Richard Fitter, is difficult to comprehend. But readers will look in vain for more than passing references to the people and the philosophies that moulded the conservation movement.

There is, superficially, an impressive amount of detail, but I could not help feeling that the author did not have a close involvement with, or understanding of, what went on at the hub of the conservation movement. It is particularly noticeable that the role of the more radical groups is not discussed in any great detail. Friends of the Earth barely get a mention, despite all their lobbying on behalf of British wildlife and close involvement with the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act. Evans claims that in the 1970s Britain was lagging behind the international movement, basing this interpretation on the fact that some of the funds for Greenpeace's purchase of the *Rainbow Warrior* came from the Dutch branch of WWF. This ignores the fact that a Greenpeace office had been established in the UK before the Netherlands and the fact that FFPS channelled funds to Greenpeace's campaign and had an observer on board *Rainbow Warrior* when the ship went to the Orkneys to challenge the seal cull. The illustration on page 113 shows the *Sea Shepherd*, described as owned by the Greenpeace organization. This ship was in fact owned by a group set up by an ex-Greenpeacer, Paul Watson.

Most of the book goes over ground that has been dealt with elsewhere (Dudley Stamp's *Nature Conservation in Britain*, Sheail's *Nature in Trust: The History of Nature Conservation in Britain* and Richard Fitter's *The Penitent Butchers*, to name only three). An historian should consult primary sources in order to establish 'truth'. Press releases, propaganda and panegyrics are not noted for their accuracy, but they do shed interpretative light. Diaries, notebooks and letters are generally much more useful sources of history, but neither have been used in this compilation. There has been little or no reference to archives, nor to any views of the people actually involved in conservation. But is it really true, for instance, of the Report of Huxley's Wild Life Conservation Special Committee, published in 1947 (of which I do happen to have a copy) that 'Conservationists still regard it highly'? I am quite certain that very few conservationists under the age of 50 have even heard of it let alone seen it.

The dramatic growth in interest in nature conservation issues over the past decade means that it is still all but impossible to condense the recent history of nature conservation in Britain into 274 pages. The account is not particularly readable, simply because the author tried to cram in too many facts with too little interpretation or context. Evans did not define his parameters and perhaps would have done better to have restricted his interest to reserves or species conservation, thereby giving greater depth to a smaller subject area.

These criticisms may appear

to suggest that the book is not worth reading. However, despite its shortcomings, it might be a good starting point for a student. As Dr Johnson said of another matter. it 'is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.'

John A. Burton

MAMMALS

Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida. Volume I Mammals edited by Stephen R. Humphrey (University Press of Florida, ISBN 0 8130 1128 0, 392 pp., £20.75)

In the period since the rather different, equivalent volume on Mammals was published in 1978, the increase in interest in the subject has been dramatic. This is reflected in both the length of the present work (the 1978 edition was a mere 52 pages) and the detail contained. Clearly, one does not sit and read a book like this – it is a work of reference to be dipped into, and used in research. Suffice to say that those accounts that I have read are all written by specialists, are thorough and have enough detail to satisfy the most critical. The taxa are described at subspecific level, using a format very similar to the (now extinct?) IUCN Red Data Books. While many zoologist might argue against the use of subspecific taxa, at least as freely as is done in North America, the conservation justification is illustrated by the Playboy or Lower Keys Marsh rabbit *Sylvilagus palustris heffneri*, so called because its description was partly financed by the Playboy Foundation. If naming discrete, threatened populations after wealthy foundations, companies or individuals, can raise funds for their conservation this seems to me far better than naming them simply for the sake of it and naming them after professional colleagues – dishing out honorary membership of the International Taxonomists Mutual Admiration Society.

My criticisms are few: a summary of the differences between the 1978 edition and the 1992, presented in tabular form, would have been useful. Although not a criticism of the information given, a special mention should be made of the bats. Most are listed as 'Status Undetermined', but this appears to be scientific pedantry. After reading the accounts I find it difficult to conclude anything other than that Florida's bats are in a very bad way. There is a burgeoning human population, massive destruction of habitat and excessive use of pesticides. Practically all the accounts record declines when any data is available – and where there is no data it does not mean that all is well. When the North American populations of species such as *Tadarida brasiliensis* are known to have declined by perhaps 90 per cent it is difficult to accept the classification of the species as simply 'Insufficiently Known'. Scientific pedantry should not be allowed to stand in the way of sounding the alarm bell, for this or any other species. The American Society of Mammalogists recently published Guidelines for the Protection of Bat Roosts (1992, *J. Mammalogy*, **4**, 707–710), which recommended 'that any species of cave-dwelling bat be treated as though their populations are in decline; exceptions should be limited only to those cases for which substantial evidence exists to the contrary'.

John A. Burton

BIRDS

The Birds of Cyprus (2nd edn) by Peter R. Flint and Peter F. Stewart (British Ornithologists' Union, c/o Zoological Museum, Tring, Herts. HP23 6AP, 1992, ISBN 0 907446 14 0, 234 pp., HB £18 including p. & p. [UK]; £20 including p. & p. [overseas])

This book is subtitled as an annotated checklist, but this is misleading because, in addition to the systematic list, there are over 60 pages devoted to sites of ornithological interest, the history of Cyprus's ornithology, geography, geology, climate, vegetation, migration, breeding, bird-killing and conservation, thus making it a valuable reference work. The book is well illustrated with colour and monochrome plates of habitats, and resident and migrant species and includes a poignant photograph of the first recorded white-tailed plover from the island. This beautiful bird soon succumbed to the hunter's gun, its body adding to the mountain of an estimated annual slaughter of 5 million birds. Heavy and sustained killing by over 40,000
licensed hunters is permitted throughout most of the year. An estimated 375,000 song thrushes were shot on one January day and bee-eaters die in their tens of thousands. This appalling carnage makes one wonder if there will be much of a systematic list to publish in future editions.

Bruce Coleman

Crane Music by Paul A. Johnsgard (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1991, ISBN 1 56098 051 6, 136 pp., HB £15.50, $23.95)

This, Paul Johnsgard's third book on these splendid birds,