

important work of Hugh Cott and other modern authorities. Folklore and crocodile-worship are included, and stories of man-eating crocodiles can be read in proper perspective against the far more numerous crocodile-killing activities of men. Maternal care, however, which must be more highly developed in crocodiles than in any other reptiles, seems to be more prolonged than he suggests; there is recent evidence that the female Nile crocodile guards her babies for several weeks, or even longer, after hatching.

Conservationists will appreciate the final chapter which emphasises the threatened state of crocodiles today, especially in countries of uncertain political stability, and discusses suitable measures for protection and rational exploitation. Guggisberg ends on a sympathetic note of guarded optimism and looks forward to the day when 'man's regard for his fellow creatures may possibly have progressed to a point where crocodile handbags, snakeskin shoes and leopard coats will generally be considered as symbols of barbarity and bad taste'.

A. D'A. BELLAIRS

**The Birds of Britain and Europe**, by Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter and John Parslow. Collins £1.50.

Its title expanded by 'with North Africa and the Middle East', and well described as the 'Complete Pocket Bird Book', the scope of this comprehensive, handy, pocket guide ranges in fact even more extensively, from Russia to the Atlantic Islands and from the Sahara to the North Pole.

Nowadays, in an endeavour to record maximum essential information in the minimum of space, originality and ingenuity are outstanding features of field guides on zoological and botanical subjects. Avoiding unnecessary space-consuming repetition has inevitably led to increasing use of symbols and reference letters – here described as a 'coded guide'. Their use has made possible a remarkable reduction in the text without seriously interfering with what one needs to know, but it would have greatly simplified speedy interpretation if the elaborate system of reference symbols and letters, the explanation of the marginal maps and their coloration, and the diverse shading indicated on the 240 maplets of Great Britain and Ireland, could all have been given for ready reference on a card; unfortunately, on the inside covers there is no space for a slip-in to take such a card. But this guide's lay-out, its wealth of information, and the beautiful illustrations in colour of every species (excepting some obscure vagrants) – named popularly and scientifically – well deserves unqualified praise. Impossible to speak too highly of its presentation and contents; certainly it is the best book of its kind.

Satisfactory identification being the prime object, the margins of the Contents pages show, minutely though clearly, a representative in colour of each bird family; especially useful, also in colour, is the Topography of a Bird. Hermann Heinzel's wonderful illustrations portray, as necessary, seasonal, sex and juvenile plumage variations, together with flight and other conspicuous behavioural patterns; concise and lucid, too, is the dissertation on pertinent characteristics such as size – in inches and centimetres – shape (including bill, wings and feet), colour, voice and behaviour, together with reference to habitat.

Artist Heinzel, author Fitter and map-compiler Parslow are all to be congratulated on a handbook of exceptional excellence.

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