

Based on sound ecological principles and a penetrating insight into human influences, the book should serve both scientists and laymen as an introduction to the study of outdoor biological processes and permit them to gain a better perspective of the role of ecologists in the modern world. Undoubtedly some of the author's general conclusions are debatable, as for instance in the discussion of energy flow in relation to maximum production and landscape equilibrium, but this is to be expected in such a complex subject and saves the book from becoming complacent and dull.

J. D. OVINGTON

Europe : A Natural History, by Kai Curry-Lindahl. Hamish Hamilton, 4½ gns.

It is not surprising that there has been no comprehensive account of the natural history of Europe before. The continent is so extensive and varied that no one man, one would have thought, could ever encompass it. But the stupendous feat has been achieved by that indefatigable traveller, the tireless Director of Natural History at the Nordiska Museum in Stockholm.

He has dealt with his subject, partly country by country, but also habitat by habitat, covering, for instance, the Mediterranean lands in one chapter, the coastlands of the Atlantic in another, the great taiga or coniferous forests of northern Europe in a third. I particularly like his way of sandwiching accounts of the typical animals of a country in with the geographical information; in Britain, for instance, the rook, the robin, the red deer and the grey seal.

Inevitably one judges such a book by the country one knows best, one's own, and there are certainly things one would have worded differently, for instance, the reference to the Dartford warbler in Devon, and surely the Rock dove breeds in Faeroe, further north than Shetland; but such instances are remarkably few. The photographs, both in colour and black and white, are superb. Altogether a book to treasure as well as to use.

R. S. R. FITTER

The Highlands and Islands, by F. Fraser Darling and J. Morton Boyd. Collins, 30s.

This is a revised and re-written version of F. Fraser Darling's *Natural History in the Highlands and Islands*, published in the New Naturalist series in 1949, and as Fraser Darling points out, the advance of our knowledge during the period that has elapsed has been greater than at any time since the publication last century of the works of Hugh Miller, Archibald Geikie and J. A. Harvie-Brown. The most important single factor influencing this has been the establishment of the Nature Conservancy. With the setting-up of many important nature reserves and research stations in the area, there has been an enormous expansion of activity, particularly at St. Kilda, Rhum, Beinn Eighe and in the Cairngorms. The Grouse and Moorland Ecology Unit has added greatly to our knowledge of the dynamics of red grouse populations, and research has been intensified on the populations and breeding ecology of red deer and grey seals, following Fraser Darling's pioneer studies. We have also learned a great deal from the vegetation studies of McVean and Ratcliffe.

Dr. Morton Boyd, the Nature Conservancy's Regional Officer for West Scotland, who, with his wide knowledge, was the obvious choice for a revision of this work, has now brought us up-to-date with all the latest