

Unfortunately, because of the abundance of man-introduced rats, only just over 400 of the total of 2450 acres of island are available for birds. Dr Bellamy concludes with a plea for the elimination of the rats and an international agreement to make the whole of the Chagos Bank a nature reserve. He has certainly provided sufficient evidence to justify his proposals.

The book is generally well produced, with attractive layout and plenty of pictures, marred only by Dr Bellamy's rather ponderous humour, especially evident in picture captions; his message is clear enough without this jokiness. It is a pity, too, that he and the editors did not take the trouble to ensure that some of the more tortuous paragraphs were clarified. But it is a book with a worthy aim, and contains a great deal of interest to specialist and non-specialist alike.

S.R.J. WOODSELL

Harpooned, by Bill Spence. Conway Maritime Press, £9.50.

Development in Britain's whaling industry before the end of the 18th century resembles nothing so much as the current plight of British Leyland. Early production was abysmally low, largely through incompetent management, and foreign competitors were thriving, especially the Dutch, who also hogged the best whaling grounds. The British Government helped by slapping heavy taxes on foreign whale product imports and offering bounties to the British, but when our chaps finally got their strategy right they were beaten up by the French navy, the two countries by then being at war. Now, of course, Japan and Russia lead the field and everyone else is trying to stop them.

All this, and what came before, between and after, has been remarkably well researched by Bill Spence. In a highly readable fashion he tells the story of commercial whaling from the 12th century to the middle of the 20th; of successive depletion of whale populations; and of successive leaders in the industry – Spain, Holland, Great Britain, America, Norway and now Japan. I always like the extra little 'throw-away' snippets in books like this, that bring history to life. It was news to me, for example, that the three ships from which tea was thrown overboard in Boston, 1772, had been brimming with whale oil in their previous voyage, which could have put a new complexion on the Boston Tea Party.

If the title suggests a text about whales it is misleading; this is about the anatomy and incipient extinction of an industry.

JON BARZDO

A Field Guide to the Land Snails of Britain and North-West Europe, by M.P. Kerney and R.A.D. Cameron. Collins, £5.50.

In the heyday of malacology, over a century ago, a number of well-illustrated books were available for the enthusiastic amateur; today this is not so, and this volume fills the gap. All 279 species occurring in the area are described, and most are illustrated. Gordon Riley's illustrations are meticulous and – to a non-specialist such as myself – adequate for identifying most species, with the help of the text. The colour plates are far less pleasing than the line drawings, the colours seeming a little bleached; in trying to give the slugs (and snails) a wet slimy appearance he (or the publisher) has lost the richness of colour of some – *Arion ater* the familiar 10-cm black or orange slug is a pale ghost of its real self.

Collins has also departed from normal field guide style by including dissections. Admittedly some species are difficult to identify, but it seems a little outside the scope of a field guide, as does the micro-structure of the shell, which needs a binocular microscope to observe. Perhaps this is merely a criticism of the title, since the important thing is to identify the slugs and snails! The maps, covering 276 species, with the British species mapped in even greater detail, are particularly instructive and useful. In

addition to plotting occurrence the British maps show relative abundance and, where known, an indication of whether the population is increasing (29 species) or decreasing (8 species). Although collecting is featured, the authors are careful to make sure the reader is warned of the conservation problems. All in all a book which should find a place in the pocket of the keen field naturalist – if he's still got space.

JOHN A. BURTON

The Atlantic Salmon: Its Future, edited by **A.E.J. Went**. Fishing News Books, £19.50.

British Freshwater Fishes – the Story of Their Evolution. By **Len Cacutt**. Croom Helm, £6.95.

The Atlantic salmon is undoubtedly a threatened species. Within the present century its range has shrunk and its numbers have decreased, as is amply borne out by the decline in global catches despite increased fishing effort by some countries. Single countries have attempted to protect their stocks, some like Iceland successfully, others like France and the United Kingdom less effectively, yet overall there is still no efficient means of protecting this one-time valuable fishery resource. Indeed, if anything, progress has been negative, for the one international body which could exercise a limited control of fisheries in the North Atlantic (ICNAF) has been disbanded in favour of a shaky North American fishery policy and the farcical attempts at fisheries management by EEC countries.

The proceedings of the second International Atlantic Salmon Symposium, held in 1978 in Edinburgh, contains a series of eighteen papers by various authorities under sub-headings – Present Situation, Salmon Exploitation, Ecology, Cultivation, and The Future, and as a result it loses the overall cohesive approach to the problems besetting the salmon which a book with fewer authors might attain. The book gives a limited overview of the status of salmon today, with discussions on past and present fishery management of salmon. By far the most valuable part of it are some of the articles on the ecology of the fish with reference to its future conservation.

Len Cacutt writes as an angler with anglers' interests in mind. Despite the promise of the subtitle, there is very little of direct relevance to the evolution of fishes or the origins of the freshwater fishes of these islands. There is, however, a wealth of detail concerning the capture of 'record' or near-record fishes which will interest anglers, and a certain amount on the biology of the species. This is an eminently readable angler's view of our freshwater fishes, written in a racy style and with abundant good humour, but purchasers should be warned that it contains a number of errors.

ALWYNE WHEELER

The Evolutionary Ecology of Animal Migration, by **R.R. Baker**, Hodder, £35.

This is not the sort of book one reads; it is the sort one has. Nicely illustrated, well indexed, impressively broad in scope, and generally readable despite the author's conscientious attempt to be scientifically precise, it is a valuable ecological reference text. This results in two recurrent stylistic flaws: a somewhat ponderous repetitiveness, largely of the definitions from the lexicon the author creates – 'habitat suitability', 'mean expectation of migration' – and the formulation of hyper-rigorous statements, such as 'no matter how long an animal remains in each volume of space occupied by its body'

Part 1 defines migration so generally that constructing a model for it is rather like devising one for digestion or skin. The thesis is that migration is advantageous and will probably occur when things are better elsewhere, but the general form of the model