

Book reviews

studies will upset current orthodoxy in evolutionary thought. Is Darwinism really worth defending?

C.J. Humphries

Sea Guide to Whales of the World

Lyall Watson

Hutchinson, £12.95

This is an attractive book, beautifully produced and easy to read. The main part is the Sea Guide, in which Lyall Watson sets out to provide a description, illustration and distribution map of every species of living cetacean. There are also simple keys for determining the identity of whales sighted at sea or stranded on beaches. Besides this, there are supporting chapters covering subjects such as cetology and cetologists (a useful one, this), stranding, general natural history, and what to do if one finds stranded whales.

The plan of the book is excellent and the price reasonable. I only wish I could recommend it highly. Unfortunately, it is marred by a large number of errors, and some perverseness on the part of the author. The latter consists of the arbitrary re-naming of a number of cetaceans which already have accepted vernacular names. This will confuse anyone referring to other books, but will annoy only those already familiar with the cetacea. The errors are another matter, for they will mislead. Partly this is a matter of the 'state of the art'. Many species of cetaceans are really insufficiently well known to be afforded the treatment adopted in this book. World distribution maps cannot be prepared from a few stranding records, nor can portraits be drawn from inadequate descriptions. It is notoriously difficult to depict the colour of living whales and dolphins, which may appear to change according to the direction of the light. The author has provided a colour chart, which is admirable, but in some cases the colour of the illustrations do not match the descriptions, or colour names are used which do not appear in the chart.

I think this book will help a lot of people to enjoy watching whales, and provide names for most of the species they see. However, even with experience, it is difficult to identify many whales in the water, and I think this point is insufficiently stressed in the book. When a second edition is

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called for (and I am sure it will be), I hope the opportunity will be taken to ensure that the text is accurate and recognise uncertainty where it exists.

Nigel Bonner

Bird Migration in Africa: movements between six continents

K. Curry-Lindahl

Academic Press, Vol. I £41.40, Vol. II £20.60

A very great deal of work went into this compilation. Much is distilled into multi-paged tables and into half-page maps of migratory distributions and movements. Not a book for easy reading, it is a source book of the African avian scene which the author has known so well over so many years. Its lengthy gestation, from 1961 to 1977, was inevitable in view of his many journeys and other conservation commitments. But the subsequent delay in bringing it to publication means it has become somewhat dated. We have become resigned to high prices from this publisher, but £62 will put these volumes beyond the reach of most individuals. Matters were not helped by giving the same preface, contents lists and index, etc., in both volumes, an unnecessary (and somewhat confusing) duplication of 63 pages. Indeed one might question the need to split the book into two at all, with an inevitable increase in binding costs.

Following, as it does, Reg Moreau's magisterial volume on African bird faunas (1966) and Palaearctic-African bird migration (1972), the present work must cover much previously known ground. But this is recognised and efforts are made to fill gaps left by Moreau and in particular to deal far more extensively with the migration of African birds within their own continent.

Apart from presenting the basic information on migrants and their migrations, there are brief discussions of a variety of topics. The last, on the relationships between migratory birds and man (Conflicts and Advantages) is, as one would expect of a Vice-President of the Society, especially illuminating.

G.V.T. Matthews

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