

follow the original authors' theses, and many ecological principles and methods are described. An excellent list of references (29 pages), ranges from Defoe through the classical ecological works of Tansley, Watt and Elton to the latest scientific journals.

Dr Smith handles the wealth of detail with consummate ease, and his writing is refreshingly clear. He appears as a scientist of sense and an author of sensibility who is able to give an authoritative account of his subject, incidentally pointing out many gaps in our knowledge, and yet retaining the delight so many feel for this type of countryside. A useful textbook, it is also an important contribution to our overall knowledge of the English chalk.

JUDY POORE

Flowers of Greece and the Balkans, a field guide, by Oleg Polunin. OUP, £40.00.

The Balkans, here defined as Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece and the east Aegean islands, Bulgaria and European Turkey, have long been renowned for their rich flora; about half the species of flowering plants present in Europe occur there, and about a quarter of these are endemic. This floral treasurehouse is not fully described in this book. It is necessarily incomplete because of lacunae in our knowledge; furthermore, such families as the Gramineae, Cyperaceae, Polygonaceae and Chenopodiaceae, have been largely or completely omitted because they are 'difficult and unattractive', while large genera, such as *Campanula*, *Centaurea* and *Dianthus*, have been drastically curtailed. The author has treated about half the Balkan flora, the 3000 species most likely to be encountered, although many of them are only named; information on the latter, as well as the keys for identifying families and genera, must be sought in Polunin's earlier book – *Flowers of Europe*.

On the credit side, this book gives an excellent thumbnail sketch of the climate, topography, vegetation and history of the plant-cover of the area. It gives a delightful account (140 pages) of many 'plant-hunting' regions in the Balkans, with good, often spectacular, photographs of various botanical vistas. Of the 142 pages of illustrations, 80 are in colour. In an area which has endured almost 10,000 years of human influence, exacerbated during recent times by the tourist boom in some parts, conservation is clearly of tremendous importance. This is stressed in the book, with the 'danger status' of threatened species being fully indicated and the susceptibility of plant communities considered.

The book is aimed at English-speaking visitors to the Balkans who want to know something of its fascinating plant-life. This introduction they will get. Warts and all, it will make the journey of the botanically minded and conservation-conscious traveller more enjoyable and instructive than was hitherto possible.

D. M. MOORE

Jungles, edited by Edward Ayensu. Cape £16.

At first sight just another ornament for the coffee table, this is in fact much more. It is a beautiful and useful book which presents the variety and fascination of the tropical rain forest in an attractive, readable and authoritative manner. The introduction describes the nature, origin, distribution and different kinds of rain forest, its climates, soils and how it functions and regenerates. This is followed by sections dealing with the structure of the forest and the place of the different groups of plants and animals in it; plant and animal partnerships (the place of ants, pollinators, lianas, orchids, the fascinating stories of figs and stranglers); man and the jungle; and, almost in the form of an appendix, a description of some of the main products of the forest (timbers, spices, resins etc. but, surprisingly, not fruits). The emphasis throughout is on the undisturbed forest, though there is a short account of economic uses and the present rapid disappearance of the forest.

The text is generally excellent, as one would expect from the authors selected to contribute. Each account is balanced and accurate and avoids the exaggeration of so