

The author does not take too gloomy a view of the future. In particular he sees rays of hope in the work of the county naturalists' trusts and in education. "Our schools and universities are the only force that can transform successive generations of young people to be vitally aware of their surroundings and to use them wisely." He concludes "Every year it becomes evident that many more people *do care*." This book should do much to add to their number.

JOHN CLEGG.

Complete Atlas of the British Isles. Reader's Digest, 75s.

This superb production, complete with a foreword by Admiral of the Fleet the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, KG (why does nobody believe nowadays that good wine needs no bush?) is the atlas to end all atlases of the British Isles. It covers the whole of the British Isles, including all Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Isles, and gives a staggering amount of geographical, topographical, historical, climatic, biological, demographic, sociological, agricultural, economic and other miscellaneous information, together with a gazetteer which even gives my own village in the Chilterns, so it must be good. The task of assembling, digesting and arranging this vast mass of information is such a remarkable achievement that it seems a great pity that the publishers have not seen fit to acknowledge the contributions of the writers and editors. What a pity, too, that the distinguished naturalists mentioned in the long list of consultants were apparently not shown the proofs before publication, for they would hardly have passed such statements as that the orange tip is the earliest spring butterfly, that the rare *diapensia* (whose single British site is in West Inverness-shire) grows in Sutherland or Caithness, or that the peregrine "chiefly hunts woodpigeon and red grouse." And a good many other statements could have been phrased more accurately.

RICHARD FITTER.

Animal Conflict and Adaptation, by J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson.

C. T. Foulis, 42s.

Like the scholar gypsy, the author travels far at a learned pace, exploring the whole field of man's wisdom and giving us glimpses of the country of his scientifically trained mind. His argument is that adaptation through conflict for food and living space is as beneficial as it is inevitable.

He opens by discussing life where it began in the sea. Conflict in the littoral habitat resulted in respiratory independence of the sea, and so to a terrestrial life; and eventually, for some animals, even harsh desert conditions. The book is packed with fascinating incidental information: the camel does not store water in its hump; there are black earthworms in the snows of Kashmir and Kilimanjaro; jumping spiders can live at 22,000 feet; some centipedes drop a leg which writhes and squeals all on its own while its owner makes off on the other (uneven number of) legs in another direction.

Without inter- and intra-specific conflict an important aspect of natural selection would vanish; and the lethal viruses and bacteria play an essential part in the ecological scheme of competition and adaptation. It is quite anthropocentric to regard cannibalism even among human beings as abhorrent; or, in animals, as "an expression of the lowest depths of utilitarian turpitude." After all it is one way of controlling population, although less effective than man's looming alternative of nuclear conflict, which in 2000 A.D., the author reminds us, will provide a lot of space for the survivors of the possible 5,000 million people—that is if they survive the radioactivity. The author pleads for the conservation of natural fauna which are often more productive of meat than introduced domestic breeds,

and laments that the deserts continue to advance aided by the goats and sheep of unenlightened and hungry nations. Man must hurry to control his own numbers and adopt a beneficial ecological balance if he is to avoid the "final catastrophe of our species," which cannot be too often reiterated; but the author believes that man, who "is naturally compassionate, will pull through in the long run." A thought-provoking book, revealing the author's own compassionate wisdom.

R. M. LOCKLEY.

The Pattern of Animal Communities, by Charles S. Elton.
Methuen, 90s.

In fifty years time, when computers have really got going on ecology, men will look back to this as one of the books that pointed the way ahead. Today, when the human brain is the best computer the ecologist has, because it can work with incomplete data, we can still be staggered at the amount and complexity of information Charles Elton has been able to compress into one pair of covers about one small piece of English countryside.

Wytham, the University of Oxford's 3400-acre estate just outside Oxford, has over the past twenty years been the scene of one of the most intensive—perhaps the most intensive—ecological surveys ever carried out. So far 3800 animal species out of an estimated 5000 have been proved to live at Wytham, representing as much as one-sixth or even one-fifth of the whole British fauna in an area, rich in varied habitats, that is only 1/60,000th of Britain. Yet even after all these years, pathetically little information is available about the vast majority of these animals and how they fit into the scheme of things at Wytham. No computer can work unless it is programmed, and again and again Charles Elton has had to resort to data from other parts of England or even—for beechwoods—other parts of Europe to fill out his story. Lucky ecologists fifty years hence, when the data from fifty more years' work can be fed into a mechanical computer!

This is a book that must be read and re-read to appreciate the fantastic complexity of the web of animal life, and how incredibly little we still know about it. The first fifty years of ecology have really only been scratching on the surface, but this book represents one of the deepest furrows yet made.

RICHARD FITTER.

Living with Deer, by Richard Prior. Deutsch, 25s.

This is the fourth in the Survival series designed to link the public more closely with a series of wildlife films produced by Anglia Television. The author has not attempted to write a book about any specific film; what he has done, and very successfully, is to produce a general and very readable account of the history of deer in Britain, their survival to the present day, and the methods that are now being used to safeguard them from cruelty. A particularly valuable final chapter deals with the present and future of deer, and the sensible and adequate control of them in face of increasing pressures on living space for man and beast. Although deer are probably more numerous today than they have been for centuries, he shows that it is possible to overcome the problems they present by sensible management, and that this is practical common sense for both farmer and forester. In learning to live with deer, inhumane treatment of them can have no place.

The author of this quite delightful book writes from personal experience and makes a sound contribution to the cause of conservation in this country. It will appeal to all who love our countryside and its wildlife. If deer are to hold a place in it, a wider interest in them is important, and Richard Prior's book contributes much towards this.

F. J. TAYLOR PAGE.