

immigrants from the north is the Baikal seal, a close relative of the Arctic ringed seal. The book is illustrated with line drawings, maps, diagrams, half-tones and three coloured plates; it has a good index and an extensive bibliography. Professor Kozhov has produced a fascinating account of the history of life of one of the most interesting biological regions of the world.

L. HARRISON MATTHEWS

The Natural History of Flies, by Harold Oldroyd. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 50s.

Centipedes of the British Isles, by E. H. Eason, Warne, 63s.

Ten Little Housemates, by Karl von Frisch. Pergamon Press, 12s. 6d.

The opening volume of a new series, "The World Naturalist," is a splendid piece of popular scientific writing by a leading expert from the British Museum (Natural History), most readable and an excellent precedent for its successors. By "flies," of course, experts mean not just the common house fly and bluebottle, but also all the insects entomologists call Diptera or two-winged flies. The book thus surveys the life and human impact of such diverse insects as mosquitoes, midges, daddy-long-legs, clegs or horse-flies, hoverflies and those terrible pests of farm stock, bots and warble flies.

Messrs. Warne are best known for their admirable "Wayside and Woodland" series, on which all the best British naturalists were brought up, and Dr. Eason's book on centipedes, profusely illustrated with line drawings instead of plates, represents a new departure. The first comprehensive and systematic account of British centipedes and their identification, it describes clearly and succinctly our thirty-two native and eleven introduced species, and will, one hopes, lead to a renewed interest in a group which, if not exactly neglected, has never suffered from a superfluity of students.

Professor von Frisch's little book on the arthropods particularly associated with man now appears in a new English edition. He writes chattily but accurately about the natural history of house flies, gnats, fleas, bed bugs, lice, clothes moths, cockroaches, silver-fish, spiders and ticks. Of these, only the silver-fish are generally harmless to man, and even they can sometimes be too much of a good thing.

R. S. R. FITTER

Checklist of the Birds of Thailand, by Herbert G. Deignan. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., \$1.00.

Thailand is one of the several big countries of South-east Asia where there are no natural history museum, no decent natural history books, and in several cases even no naturalists! This is one of the great difficulties we face in getting things done to conserve the fauna and flora even at the simplest level. Virtually all the pressure and all the interested personnel are from "ex-patriates", outsiders, non-Asians. In exercising such pressure they have left it very late. Much which could easily have been achieved in 1954 has become exceedingly difficult in 1964—coming from outside. Herbert Deignan is one of the few outsiders who has steadily devoted himself to the natural history of this area, and to the birds of Thailand in particular. Now, at last, he has given us a proper scientific background to the ornithology of a large, exciting region. A previous nominal list of Thai birds published in *Ibis* in 1920 listed 732 forms: this checklist lists 1,173.

As in any ordinary checklist the principal emphasis is on nomenclature. We can get nowhere until that is straightened out. Dr. Deignan handles the matter with his usual extreme competence. But one cannot help regretting that only Latin names are used throughout. This is carrying scholarship to absurdity—especially as a large number of the birds dealt with are migrants with names commonly known to ornithologists all over the world. There is an effective numbered map and a good cross-reference system for localities in the text. The status of each species is summarised distribution-wise. Owing to the poverty of field observation, it is probably impossible to supply much information on the relative abundance or rarity of the resident species. But perhaps it was a pity not even to indicate which are the very common forms—my own Thai list based on sporadic visits over the last fifteen years, is of well over eighty species that anyone can see. More important, in the present context, no indication is given where species are rare or in any sort of difficulty, present or potential.

But it would be ungrateful to look a gift horse in the mouth. Dr. Deignan has set a foundation on the basis of which others can tackle these sorts of problem. With the population explosion of South-east Asia going hand in hand with huge new political ideas of development, land use, jungle felling, etc., etc., the need to translate scientific facts into simple intelligible ideas becomes daily more acute. With Dr. Dillon Ripley as the new secretary of the great institution which published this 265-page Checklist, we may hope for some new thinking in that direction—all the more so since Dr. Ripley himself is another of the few true naturalists of South-east Asia.

TOM HARRISON

Man, Nature and Disease, by Richard Fiennes. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 36s.

War, pestilence, and famine have been, in the past, the prime factors controlling human populations. The introduction of massive weapons of destruction has largely removed the first; modern medicine is racing ahead to remove the second, and has virtually done so in the more advanced communities; and attempts are being made to eliminate the last remaining inhibitor of a wholesale population explosion. Such problems must worry anyone with a degree of biological understanding for, far from being an interesting scientific exercise of some economic importance, such as are many of the studies of population dynamics in other animals, this is one which affects ourselves and our children most intimately, or will do so in a few years.

Mr. Fiennes' work as a veterinary surgeon in Africa brought him into contact not only with animal disease but also with human sickness and its social problems in more natural environments than we see in Britain. More recently, as pathologist to the Zoological Society of London, he has developed the study of comparative medicine in the laboratory, so following up his earlier work in the "field". In this book he sets out some of the health problems of the more natural human populations, which education and medical science are doing so much to control. He traces the history and natural history of certain of the pestilences of mankind through from Biblical and classical times to the present day, and deals with some of the major infections such as leprosy, poliomyelitis and malaria, before passing on to the inter-relationship between human diseases and the causative organisms, bacteria, viruses, and those remarkable parasites with complicated life histories. His recent work has led him into the realms of stress sickness in animals as well as in man where, due to disorganisation of the output of