

to suggest that the book is not worth reading. However, despite its shortcomings, it might be a good starting point for a student. As Dr Johnson said of another matter. it 'is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.'

John A. Burton

MAMMALS

**Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida. Volume I Mammals** edited by Stephen R. Humphrey (University Press of Florida, ISBN 0 8130 1128 0, 392 pp., £20.75)

In the period since the rather different, equivalent volume on Mammals was published in 1978, the increase in interest in the subject has been dramatic. This is reflected in both the length of the present work (the 1978 edition was a mere 52 pages) and the detail contained. Clearly, one does not sit and read a book like this – it is a work of reference to be dipped into, and used in research. Suffice to say that those accounts that I have read are all written by specialists, are thorough and have enough detail to satisfy the most critical. The taxa are described at subspecific level, using a format very similar to the (now extinct?) IUCN Red Data Books. While many zoologist might argue against the use of subspecific taxa, at least as freely as is done in North America, the conservation justification is illustrated by the Playboy or Lower Keys Marsh rabbit *Sylvilagus palustris heffneri*, so called because its description was partly financed by the Playboy Foundation. If naming discrete, threatened populations after wealthy foundations, companies or individ-

uals, can raise funds for their conservation this seems to me far better than naming them simply for the sake of it and naming them after professional colleagues – dishing out honorary membership of the International Taxonomists Mutual Admiration Society.

My criticisms are few: a summary of the differences between the 1978 edition and the 1992, presented in tabular form, would have been useful.

Although not a criticism of the information given, a special mention should be made of the bats. Most are listed as 'Status Undetermined', but this appears to be scientific pedantry. After reading the accounts I find it difficult to conclude anything other than that Florida's bats are in a very bad way. There is a burgeoning human population, massive destruction of habitat and excessive use of pesticides. Practically all the accounts record declines when any data is available – and where there is no data it does not mean that all is well. When the North American populations of species such as *Tadarida brasiliensis* are known to have declined by perhaps 90 per cent it is difficult to accept the classification of the species as simply 'Insufficiently Known'. Scientific pedantry should not be allowed to stand in the way of sounding the alarm bell, for this or any other species. The American Society of Mammalogists recently published Guidelines for the Protection of Bat Roosts (1992, *J. Mammalogy*, 4, 707–710), which recommended 'that any species of cave-dwelling bat be treated as though their populations are in decline; exceptions should be limited only to those cases for which substantial evidence exists to the contrary'.

John A. Burton

BIRDS

**The Birds of Cyprus** (2nd edn) by Peter R. Flint and Peter F. Stewart (British Ornithologists' Union, c/o Zoological Museum, Tring, Herts. HP23 6AP, 1992, ISBN 0 907446 14 0, 234 pp., HB £18 including p. & p. [UK]; £20 including p. & p. [overseas])

This book is subtitled as an annotated checklist, but this is misleading because, in addition to the systematic list, there are over 60 pages devoted to sites of ornithological interest, the history of Cyprus's ornithology, geography, geology, climate, vegetation, migration, breeding, bird-killing and conservation, thus making it a valuable reference work. The book is well illustrated with colour and monochrome plates of habitats, and resident and migrant species and includes a poignant photograph of the first recorded white-tailed plover from the island. This beautiful bird soon succumbed to the hunter's gun, its body adding to the mountain of an estimated annual slaughter of 5 million birds. Heavy and sustained killing by over 40,000 licensed hunters is permitted throughout most of the year. An estimated 375,000 song thrushes were shot on one January day and bee-eaters die in their tens of thousands. This appalling carnage makes one wonder if there will be much of a systematic list to publish in future editions.

Bruce Coleman

**Crane Music** by Paul A. Johnsgard (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1991, ISBN 1 56098 051 6, 136 pp., HB £15.50, \$23.95)

This, Paul Johnsgard's third book on these splendid birds,