

Book reviews

great credit for the support they have given during the past 50 years to the concept of conservation in the Galapagos. They have been very conscious of being the guardians of a major element in the world's scientific heritage, and ensured that the islands were among the first four World Heritage sites. Their partnership with the international scientific community, as Corley Smith points out, is unique, just as the islands themselves are in many ways unique.

Altogether the book provides a most valuable summary of the history, natural history, ecology and conservation of the Galapagos, and is now the essential reference book on the islands.

Richard Fitter, Council Member, Charles Darwin Foundation

The Macmillan Guide to Britain's Nature Reserves

Jeremy Hywel-Davies and Valerie Thom
Macmillan, London, 1984, £30.00

Recent surges of interest in natural history have tempted many British publishers to flood the market with ill-conceived or redundant books not properly covering their purported fields and executed well below the professional standards that sophisticated readers are entitled to expect. One result has been a lack of funding adequate to do each job properly. Perhaps lessons are being learnt, and we can be glad to find here a real major need correctly assessed and competently filled at a price that, high as it may seem, gives good value. Covering some 2000 sites of wildlife interest to which the public have some form of access in England, Wales, and Scotland, it gives for each basic factual information on location, area, management, character, restrictions, available publicity and best seasons to visit. This is followed by at least a few lines of description of a creditably succinct and accurate form, accompanied by well-chosen pictures in colour and black-and-white, some of the former even greener than their natural subjects! Each county or region has a preface by a locally knowledgeable naturalist briefly reviewing its distinctive features, and a map, some of which are less informative than others.

As a comprehensive major work of reference this

merits a place in any good library, and although inevitably a bit heavy will be a valuable companion in travel. It is almost too thoroughly indexed—there are over 300 page references to oak alone—and has a useful glossary and address list of organisations. Apart from its value for reference at all levels, both in the library and in the field, it will be helpful even to those who are expertly and managerially involved as a conspectus of the present state of play in our impressively successful efforts to multiply the number and coverage of protected sites, and as a guide to the outstanding gaps.

E.M. Nicholson, conservationist and author

Enjoying Ornithology: A Celebration of Fifty Years of the British Trust for Ornithology 1933–1983

Edited and compiled by Ronald Hickling
T. and A.D. Poyser, Calton, 1983, £13.00

Anyone who is interested in birds eventually reaches the point when he or she joins the BTO, or loses enthusiasm. The Trust has after its first 50 years involved itself in every aspect of ornithology, simply because as the supreme shepherd of this pervasive occupation it has enabled the birdwatcher to expand his or her enjoyment. It has done this by supplying him or her with the motivation and the methodology to keep records, and by applying those records in enlightened ways to reveal trends and changes in the status of birds in Britain.

From the contributions of many writers, Ronald Hickling has most smoothly contrived a clear and logical history of a half-century in which the science of ornithology has advanced at an astonishing rate. Max Nicholson's story of the BTO's birth is followed by Robert Spencer's assessment of its current role. Each of the Trust's major surveys is described in terms of its contribution to ecological knowledge and of its relevance to birdwatching as purely a hobby. In 'Our Changing Avifauna' the origins and status of Britain's bird life are a source of fascination exceeded only by the excitement of anticipating its future; this chapter, too, is by Robert Spencer, surely now the most skilful communicator of all writers about birds.

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