

The Butterflies of Malawi, by D. Gifford. Wild Life Society of Malawi, P.O. Box 125, Blantyre, 50s.

Admirably clear and concise, this small book of 136 pages deals with all the five hundred odd species of butterflies recorded from Malawi. It is constructed as a running key which will enable lepidopterists to identify most of the species mentioned with little trouble. All original references are given, as well as type localities, synonymy (for Malawi only), distribution and habitat in Malawi and food plants when known. Descriptive material has been kept down to a minimum for obvious reasons of economy, but the characters on which the key is based are adequate for the majority of species.

Classification and nomenclature are in accordance with the most recent published work, and there is a full bibliography occupying nineteen pages. Nine plates in full colour illustrate one hundred and forty species, but the value of the book would have been enhanced at little extra cost by the addition of a few half-tone plates and more information on the general distribution of the species.

As Sir Malcolm Barrow points out in his foreword, although comprehensive works have been published on the butterflies of South Africa, Rhodesia, Kenya and Uganda, no such works exist on the very rich butterfly fauna of the intervening areas, and the book will help to fill a long-standing gap in the literature. As well as being an important contribution to our knowledge of African butterflies, it will be of greatest value to the intelligent amateur.

R. H. CARCASSON.

Coral Reefs, by Lois & Louis Darling. Methuen, 15s.

The authors have established themselves as writers of books for the young in pleasing and lucid language, with clear and satisfying illustrations. "Coral Reefs" comes up to their usual standard in appearance and presentation, but falls short in its information. The first and most obvious criticism is that it is as much about coral islands as coral reefs. The fact that an atomic explosion was carried out on a coral island has little to do with a zoological treatise on coral reefs, and the lives of people on coral islands are also incidental to the reefs. The space so occupied could better have been employed to include some of the important items omitted.

Coral reefs, as a subject, are not easy to cope with under the best circumstances. The authors show from their preface that they have read the subject up, and that may be the trouble: they may have done too much reading to keep a perspective, for in places the text is far from clear-cut, and in others tends to be misleading, if not inaccurate.

MAURICE BURTON.

The Leviathans, by Tim Dinsdale. Routledge, 30s.

If the general consensus of opinion, including that of professional zoologists, is swinging fairly rapidly towards the conclusion that there IS a large unidentified species, be it fish, fowl or good red herring, in Loch Ness, then much of the credit is due to Tim Dinsdale. In 1960, on the first of his twelve expeditions to Loch Ness, he photographed an object from Foyers that was the subject of a programme on Panorama, his first book "The Loch Ness Monster," which was a model of lucid objectivity, and of endless controversy. It was nearly six years before argument was settled by the RAF Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (who will argue about an inch at a mile's range) declaring that what he had filmed "was an animate object." They went on to say that 12-16 feet of length was showing with a height of three feet and a beam of six feet. It was swimming at ten knots—quite an "object"!

"The Leviathans" is described as a "progress report" but unhappily the

last five years have shown little progress at least so far as photography and identification are concerned. The author has, however, performed a valuable service in pointing out that the species is almost certainly a stranded variant of the misnamed "Sea-Serpent"—Leviathan of the Old Testament—and that identical accounts, both legendary and recent, come from Canada, Ireland, other Scottish lochs and Sweden. In all cases the lakes concerned were connected with the sea until a few thousand years ago.

Owing to its accessibility, the road that runs its full length and the coldness of the water which discourages water-ski-ing, speed-boats and other disturbance, Loch Ness remains the key to this most fascinating mystery. Dinsdale can assuredly claim to be the locksmith.

DAVID JAMES.

BRIEF REVIEWS

A small well illustrated field guide for the tourist is **Wildlife of Kafue and Luangwa**, by B. L. Mitchell and W. F. H. Ansell, published by the Zambia National Tourist Bureau, PO Box 17, Lusaka, 4s 6d). The text, which covers 72 animals and three reptiles, with emphasis on identification, is admirably supplemented with drawings by C. T. Asterley Maberly, and would be helpful for the tourist in East Africa too.

The Shell Nature Lovers' Atlas, by James Fisher (Michael Joseph, 7s 6d) is a guide to nearly 700 places in England, Wales and Scotland of interest to field naturalists, including archaeologists. Attractively designed, with the relevant map opposite each page of text, it includes large gardens, nature reserves and wild places, and indicates where permits are necessary. But why no road numbers?

Ospreys in Speyside, by George Waterston, a small illustrated booklet published by the RSPB (The Lodge, Sandy, Beds., 5s. 6d.), gives a short account of the osprey saga up to the end of 1965.

Two outstandingly well illustrated and attractively produced American books for the young would-be naturalist are **Birds** and **Snakes** in the Young Pathfinder's Series, by Hilda Simon (Muller, 13s 6d). Text and drawings are excellent, and both books are remarkable good value.

ABOUT WHALES

A Hundred Years of Modern Whaling, by E. J. Slijper. Netherlands Commission for International Nature Protection. Obtainable from the FPS, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, NW1, free, 8d postage.

A brief (30-page) illustrated, readable and authoritative résumé of the past 100 years in the whaling industry, the situation to-day, and the prospects for the future, by the Dutch expert, Professor Slijper. Reprinted from *Mededelingen*, No. 19.

Catalog of Living Whales, by Philip Hershkovitz. Bulletin 246, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., 1966. US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402, \$1.

A comprehensive taxonomic list of the living whales of the world, with full treatment of synonyms and brief data on distribution.