

tropics. These are not just forestry policies, they include policies on extension of agriculture, mining, dams, roads and many other projects directly destructive of forests. They also include tax, credit and pricing policies that stimulate short-term commercial investment in forest exploitation.

The editors identify a series of measures for adoption by tropical governments, and others for adoption by industrial countries and international agencies. They emphasize that industrial nations must recognize the global benefits from setting aside tropical rain forests for conservation, and urge development assistance agencies to site major projects away from critical ecosystems. Finally, they support the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, a five-point framework that gives emphasis to cross-sectoral solutions to tropical deforestation.

This is a scholarly work virtually without illustrations. It is suitable for policy-makers, advanced students and conservationists concerned to find out the underlying political reasons for tropical deforestation today. *N. Mark Collins.*

Studies in Himalayan Ecology

Edited by Tej Vir Singh and Jagdish Kaur

Himalayan Books, New Delhi, 1989 (revised edition), Rs495

This is a slightly enlarged edition of a book first published in 1980. Of the 29 chapters, six are new, one is revised; two of the papers new to this book were first published elsewhere. The mean chapter length is 9.5 pages; a few should have been longer, and some shorter.

The 'Ecology' of the title is used in the widest sense, with

coverage including such disparate topics as floristics, tourism, and the dynamics of water erosion; there is a commendable emphasis on development issues. 'Himalayan' is used more narrowly; the case-study chapters are rooted firmly in India's Garwhal Himalaya and similar regions of Nepal and Pakistan receive no mention.

The book is not for casual reading; the text includes many legible graphs and tables, but there are few photographic illustrations (all, except a small frontispiece, in murky black-and-white). There is an important core of contributions covering: water erosion and remedial measures; watershed conservation; deforestation and flood risk; the ecology of forest fires; plant breeding and development; potential for increased fodder production; agroforestry in the hills; and rural development. The merits of these chapters outweigh the demerits of the few where jargon is more evident than meaningful content. Overall, the book would have benefited from more selectivity, a heavier editorial hand, and an introductory chapter putting the major themes in perspective; nevertheless, it can be recommended as a useful survey of many key topics.

Brian Groombridge.

Conservation of European Reptiles and Amphibians

Edited by Keith Corbett

Christopher Helm, London, 1989, 274pp., PB £11.95

The wide interest shown in Europe's surprisingly diverse herpetofauna (278 species according to the present volume, which includes Turkey and the western USSR) is attested to by the existence of field guides in several European lan-

guages. Given this, the scarcity of readily available information on the current status of these species has been somewhat frustrating to date.

This volume, compiled by the Conservation Committee of the Societas Europaea Herpetologica, goes a considerable way towards filling the gap. Following brief introductory chapters on the European herpetofauna, the threats they face, and international efforts for their conservation (particularly the Bern Convention), twelve 'key' taxa and two critical sites (Evros in Greece and eastern Sardinia) are reviewed in some detail. The rest of the volume comprises brief accounts for each country in Europe, summarizing present knowledge and highlighting the all too evident gaps in that knowledge. Although the book could have benefited from tighter editorial control, it still provides a very useful introduction to the subject.

Martin Jenkins.

Crocodiles

Rodney Steel

Christopher Helm, London, 1989, 198pp., HB £14.95

To judge from the popularity of the dinosaur exhibits at museums around the world, one would anticipate that the appeal of Rodney Steel's book on crocodiles would be enhanced by his frequent reference to their illustrious progenitors. The book is heavily slanted towards the morphology and palaeontological affiliations of crocodiles, but weaves this into a popular account of the family and its biology.

The central part describes each of the extant species of crocodylian in turn, summarizing distribution and status, with a collection of snippets