

Needless to say, the book is not just a catalogue of overexploitation and pollution incidents; there are prescriptions, but compared with the descriptions these are of a very general nature. For example, 'unless concerted action is taken immediately there will be a further decline in the planet's capacity to support its population'; 'Maintain ecological processes'; 'Utilise species and ecosystems sustainably', and 'The way to save the world is to invent and apply patterns of development that will also conserve the living resources essential for human survival and wellbeing'. Perhaps the author should have rejected the main title of this book and substituted the sub-title.

I have no argument with the intentions underlying the writing of this book. What does concern me is that with such a title the non-committed reader will search for solutions and react in much the same way as he did some twenty years ago.

JOHN PHILLIPSON

Demain la Famine ou la Conspiration du Silence, by Jean-Paul Harroy. Hayez, Brussels, BF495.

Homo tyrannicus: A History of Man's War Against Animals, by Peter Verney. Mills & Boon, £6.95.

Tomorrow Famine or the Conspiracy of Silence is a passionate and factual 'j'accuse' against the laissez-faire attitudes of the Third World governments and those associated with them, including multilateral and bilateral aid organisations, to the rapidly deteriorating conditions of rural populations in the tropics. The author is an outstanding authority on tropical Africa, where he spent a considerable part of his career, both in the field as conservator of Zaire's Virunga (formerly Albert) National Park and later in political high office as Vice-Governor General of the Congo and Governor of Rwanda and Burundi; the last two he guided into independence. Professor Harroy's PhD thesis was the now classical *Afrique, terre qui meurt* (1944), one of the best treatises on African ecology, but little known in Anglo-Saxon countries. Had politicians and decision-makers read this book 36 years ago, Africa's renewable natural resources might not now be in such deplorable shape. The author is also prominent in international conservation, having been the first Secretary-General of IUCN and for six years Chairman of its National Parks Commission.

This book makes an eloquent, though at times somewhat repetitive, analysis of the main culprits and reasons for the worsening food crisis and environmental rural conditions in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania. He describes several full sets of political, socio-cultural and economic obstacles which block any meaningful development of Third World rural areas. Hand in hand with deteriorating life conditions and dwindling food and domestic fuel resources go the shrinking natural resources – water, soils, vegetation and wild animals. It is a vicious circle.

Harroy regards the ongoing North-South dialogue as an exchange of polite banalities that avoid all honest approach to basic problems. In the chorus of unrealistic nonsense the aid organisations share the responsibility, or rather lack of it. Either they do not understand what they have been seeing for decades in developing countries, or they just accept the policies favouring urban populations and forget the vast, silent rural majority. He divides the three billion inhabitants of the Third World into a modern sector of about one billion individuals, mainly living in cities and therefore politically important and a rural sector of two billion that is virtually ignored and starving.

It is interesting that Harroy includes IUCN in the 'silent conspiracy' because it prefers not to speak out about the population explosion and other basic factors behind the actual destruction of renewable natural resources. Many would agree.

Homo tyrannicus presents a parade of familiar stories of man's plundering of animal resources in various parts of the world – whaling, the fur trade, the elimination of the American bison, the disappearance of the passenger pigeon, the dodo, the auk and so forth. This chronicle of often-encountered historical facts may be useful to have repeated for the benefit of young readers, to whom they are new, although there are a

number of errors, but it is of little value to those who have read them in a dozen other books. No sources are given, and no references (apart from direct quotations), despite the fact that the book is essentially a compilation of already published data.

KAI CURRY-LINDAHL

Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: the Birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. II Hawks to Bustards. Chief Editor: Stanley Cramp. Oxford UP, £30.

This second volume of the European birdwatcher's bible maintains the very high standards set by the first. It covers three important groups: diurnal birds of prey or raptors, gamebirds, and the curiously diverse assemblage in the order Gruiformes, cranes, bustards, rails and the Andalusian hemipode or little button-quail. If the interval between Volumes I and II (three years) is to become the norm, Volume VII will appear in 1995. But then we are still awaiting Volume XI of Peters' *Birds of the World*, started in the early 1930s.

There are two changes in the editorial board, D.I.M. Wallace coming in to do field characters in place of James Ferguson-Lees and C.S. Roselaar to aid Jan Wattel with plumages and suchlike, and the artists are reduced to three: C.J.F. Coombs and Peter Hayman from the original team, and Ian Willis as a newcomer. But the artists are still not acknowledged on the title page; mention on the dust jacket and an inconspicuous note embedded in the introduction are not adequate. Both colour plates and line drawings are all excellent for their purpose. In a context like this, a certain amount of stylisation is essential, but very often the 'jizz' is there too.

The text, as before, is arranged in 16 sections under each species: field characters, habitat, distribution, population, movements, food, social pattern and behaviour, voice, breeding, plumages, bare parts, moults, measurements, weights, structure and geographical variation. Doubtless it would be possible to include more, but this would have threatened the entire enterprise. As it is, the task of editing each volume, and melding together the contributions of twelve contributors into a coherent whole, appears to reach the limits of what is humanly possible within a finite time. All praise therefore to those who are achieving this titanic feat.

RICHARD FITTER

The Year of the Greylag Goose, by Konrad Lorenz. Eyre Methuen, £9.95.

Konrad Lorenz, born in 1903 and now the doyen of behaviourists, retired in 1973 from the directorship of the Max Planck Institute for Behavioural Physiology in Bavaria to live in the Alm valley of his native Austria. Here in the fairytale beauty of a valley almost unscathed by man, with woodlands and waters shadowed by rugged mountains, a series of ponds was constructed so that Lorenz could continue to study his beloved geese. Hand-reared geese brought from Bavaria formed the basis of a colony which now remains in the valley throughout the year. The book charts, in text and pictures, the annual cycle of the fascinating and noble species.

Greylag geese are particularly interesting for their familial behaviour, which is in many ways analogous to human family life. The analogy is not anthropomorphic, but based on objective observations. For instance, in pair formation these follow a markedly similar course to that undertaken by humans. A young male will show a sudden infatuation for a particular female, and intense courtship will follow – sometimes with much interference from the angry father. The young gander shows off his strength and courage, and if the female responds there is a subsequent partnership ceremony (triumph-calling ceremony). If nothing intervenes the two geese remain faithful to each other for the rest of their lives; as with humans something often does intervene. Analogies are dangerously misleading if taken too far, but, as Lorenz points out in his foreword, this is not sufficient justification for dismissing behavioural