

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

studies. There certainly still is mistrust of, and in some cases contempt for, the descriptive sciences based as they are on perception. Possibly this is because perception is often inseparable from sensations of beauty, and because it cannot always be entirely freed from value judgements. Aesthetic response is an integral part of observation. This is no more apparent than in the extraordinarily beautiful photographs in this book. Sybille and Klaus Kalas took these photographs as part of their research programmes, yet they are hauntingly beautiful.

In a characteristically modest way, Lorenz says that the text was written merely to accompany the photographs, the real story being told by the photographs themselves. This is perhaps too modest, for explanation is an essential part of the book, and the text is informative, simple and often witty. I unreservedly recommend this book.

P.J.S. OLNEY

The Irish Wildlife Book, edited by **Fergus O’Gorman**, illustrated by Gerrit van Gelderen, Eamon de Buitear and Richard Mills. John Coughlan, £5.50.

Ireland has not, until recently, been associated with the leaders in the field of conservation, but if the recent dramatic increase in interest and activity continues, it will soon be an example to the rest of the world. At present the movement is small enough not to get bogged down with bureaucracy and paperwork, and the enthusiasm of a young and vigorous movement is certainly apparent in the 159 pages of this book. I can think of no other book to compare it with. It is truly an Irish wildlife book – no two chapters seem related, yet under Fergus O’Gorman’s skilful editorship, it has come together as a remarkable overview of wildlife and conservation, assembled not only with science in mind, but also with an eye for the visual appeal and a considerable amount of wit and charm. Gerrit van Gelderen’s ‘comic strips’ deserve to be reprinted as posters and leaflets; not only are they very instructive, but they teach with humour. Apparently the book was started on September 1 1979 – and in the bookshops by Christmas – in itself a remarkable achievement. It is published in conjunction with the Irish Wildlife Federation, An Taisce and the Irish Wildlife Conservancy, and they all deserve to have new members flocking to them as a result of this book. The 27 chapters range across ‘Megaceros to Mink’ to ‘Salmon’, from ‘The Burren, the Fertile Rock’, to ‘Dublin’s Nature Paradise’, and from ‘Wetlands are not Wastelands’ to ‘A Whale of a Tale’. It would be a narrow-minded naturalist who would not find something to delight in here.

JOHN A. BURTON

Wildlife of Scotland, edited by **F.H. Holliday**. MacMillan, £8.95.

For both amateurs and professionals Scotland has few parallels in the opportunities it offers for studying wildlife. Many of its attractions are obvious – its beauty and isolation, the diversity of habitats and the wide variety of animals that occupy them. Equally important are its practical advantages, including the accessibility of its wilderness areas, the good visibility offered by moorland habitats and the extensive knowledge of topography, geology and botany that already exists. Small wonder then that studies of Scottish wildlife have a long and distinguished history and that, arguably, more is known about the plant and animal populations of Scotland than about those of any other country of similar size and population density.

Wildlife of Scotland provides a review of our present knowledge. It is divided up on the basis of habitats: the first seven chapters cover the biology of the uplands and lowlands; of forests and woodlands, lochs, rivers and estuaries, while the last three chapters deal with more specific topics, the Hebrides and the offshore islands, Scottish mammals, and interactions between plants and people. Fred Holliday, former Chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council, has been able to call on a formidable array of talent, and each of the ten authors is an expert in his or her field. The result is a detailed but readable account of the current state of knowledge of the ecology of