peep-show, and the tally of spectators at the nesting site must now be nearing the million mark.

This RSPB triumph was primarily due to the faith and courage of a small group of dedicated conservationists, but it would have been impossible without a very considerable expenditure of manpower and money. I cannot help thinking that a comparable expenditure of resources in some poor country might have saved a whole doomed habitat and not just a few members of one species, which was not universally endangered. This is not meant even remotely as a criticism. I know that I am not comparing like with like and that gifts left by Loch Garten visitors must have handsomely covered the outlay. But the greatest value of this success story, quite apart from boosting RSPB membership, would be if it provided inspiration to devote equal efforts to more important projects further from home. Time is not on the side of conservation, so it is little comfort to recall that Operation Osprey could not have been mounted 50 years earlier. In their different ways, these two books do illustrate the growing concern for wildlife, even if indirectly they demonstrate the need to quicken our pace, widen our horizons, and dig deeper into our pockets.

G.T. CORLEY SMITH

The Tidal Thames: The History of a River and Its Fishes, by **Alwyne Wheeler.** Routledge, £8.95.

The cleansing of the polluted Thames is one of the great conservation successes of the last half of the century. In *The Thames Transformed* the late Jeffrey Harrison and Peter Grant described its impact on the bird population of the Thames estuary. Now Alwyne Wheeler of the British Museum (Natural History) tells the story from the angle of the fish populations. From a time when there were virtually no fish in the river between Richmond and Gravesend, we have reached a period when some fish can be caught by anglers throughout this once highly polluted stretch. The first part of the book describes how the river became progressively polluted by sewage and industrial discharge during and after the Industrial Revolution and how the once rich fisheries of the estuary were destroyed. With the post-war decision to clean the river up, the author is able to chronicle the gradual recolonisation of the river below Teddington Lock. Today the smelt is once more a common fish, and salmon and sea trout are beginning to re-enter the estuary. The last part of the book describes the new status of each fish, freshwater, migratory and marine.

This is a fine book that deserves to be widely read. The Thames Water Authority ought to distribute it widely to show what can be done.

R.S.R. FITTER

The Sinking Ark, by **Norman Myers.** Pergamon, £4.50.

As Norman Myers rightly says in his very first line: 'This is not the first book on disappearing species'. The difference with this one, he claims, is that it takes the theme further, by looking at the prospects for *all* species and by asking *why* species are being allowed to disappear. On the first point, instead of the traditional cry that we are losing one species a year, Myers suggests that it may be one a day, bearing in mind the 5-10 million thought to exist. On the second point he feels we should examine (and he does) every aspect impinging upon species disappearance, such as the political, economic, legal, social and cultural sides of the question.

The result is a very well thought-out book. Its chapters, with all their sub-headings, have been arranged extremely academically. Most of the subjects that he discusses, however important, have only a single index entry, a sure sign of advanced planning. In essence, the book has three sections: the problem in general, the tropical forests in particular, and conservation strategies that should be adopted to deal with them. The last section is, alas, the shortest, as those of us who are already converted (and who read *Oryx*) know the problems well enough but are lacking in solutions. I would like to have