

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 Gerritt 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. Gerritt 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

Scotland, which is greatly enhanced by lavish colour illustrations. The very evident enthusiasm of the authors for the areas which they cover has permitted the book to capture the excitement of ecological research and both amateur and professional will find much that is new and little that is dull.

T.H. CLUTTON-BROCK

**Flora Europaea, Vol. 5, edited by T.G. Tutin *et al.* Cambridge UP, £37.50.**

With the publication of this fifth volume one of the most important recent taxonomic projects has been completed. Anyone who needs to be able to name plants in Europe can be grateful to the team of authors who have put together this *magnum opus*. It is a relief to the professional botanist to be able to quote a source for nomenclature and taxonomy that will be accepted as standard by all other workers.

Volume 5 covers the whole of the Monocotyledons from Alismataceae to Orchidaceae. The gross taxonomy will not cause any surprises, but at the generic and specific levels the lumpers, splitters and name-droppers have been at work. I was certainly pleased to see *Scirpus* re-embrace *Bolboschoenus*, *Holoschoenus*, *Isolepis*, *Schoenoplectus*, and *Trichophorum*. In the Gramineae, however, the nomenclature caused me some problems. The genus *Festuca* is a minefield for unwary botanists, but using *Flora Europaea* I was not wholly able to sort out the nomenclature of what used to be *F. cinerea* and *F. glauca*, and the lists of synonyms provided do not seem to be sufficiently comprehensive.

Perhaps the authors can be forgiven for leaving *Festuca* as complex as its biological reality, but a few pages further came a greater shock. At first I thought the genus *Leymus* was an improbable misprint for *Elymus*, but *E. arenarius* has in fact become *L. arenarius*. The genus *Elymus* still exists and it contains all the familiar species of *Agropyron* – that genus now comprises a few species in central Asia!

Clearly any new flora will bring forward nomenclatural changes like this, and doubtless contemporaries castigated Bentham and Hooker for the same reason. Gradually the new names will come to be accepted (or will they? – I have to confess to still using the old ‘unsplit’ genus *Lycopodium*, and Volume 1 appeared in 1964), but when one bears in mind the necessary element of artificiality in any system of biological classification, changes such as those in *Agropyron* and *Elymus* require powerful justification. I fear it will still be *Agropyron repens* that I dig up from my garden for a few years yet.

Nevertheless, as a whole *Flora Europaea* has been characterised by nomenclatural restraint and has proved taxonomically robust. It has stimulated much valuable taxonomic research and radically altered our conception of the flora of Europe. Reference works can become standards either because so little is known about the field that the mere existence of the work gives it a necessary authority, or because the treatment is so exhaustive that it can be relied upon to be accurate. *Flora Europaea* fits the second category.

A.H. FITTER

**The Private Life of the Otter, by Philip Wayre. Batsford, £4.95.**

The meat of this book is in the delightful and informative first six chapters on the otter's natural history. They provide a unique insight into the otter's private life and are illustrated with the author's excellent photographs. The book's title is misleading, however, since three chapters are largely devoted to the otter's public life at the Otter Trust – which is interesting enough, but not without padding; for example, a detailed account of exactly how the otter pens at the Otter Trust are constructed.

The chapter on otter conservation is notable for its omissions rather than its content. On page 81 Philip Wayre says ‘it is to the landowner that we must look for the survival of the otter over large areas of Britain’, and yet there is no mention of the county