

Peter Slater's seven co-authors include four from the previous book. This is the first of a two-volume field guide which is obviously going to be a first-class addition to the world series of such guides. It is not the authors' fault if there are so many birds that they have to be dealt with in two volumes – most jackets have two pockets!

The Bells' little book, formerly quite useful, is now rather put in the shade by Slater's. It contains relatively few birds, and at £3.75 must be regarded as distinctly expensive. Elaine Power's is a most attractive picture book, with a painting and a black and white drawing for each of 20 birds, all beautifully reproduced, and a minimum of text.

RICHARD FITTER

Animal Traps and Trapping, by James A. Bateman. David and Charles, £3.50.

Catching wild animals for food, for their skins and to prevent them catching you, is fundamental to the life of man living primitively, whether today or half a million years ago. In colonising new areas, fur-trapping has often been the forerunner of agriculture and civilisation, so it is not surprising that the subject matter of this book fascinates not only many countrymen, but also urban men whether or not they escape into rural pursuits in their leisure time.

In dealing with the development and manufacture of traps, natural traps and man's traps for insects, fish, birds, mammals and general matters, Mr. Bateman has covered so wide a field that a compendium approach is almost obligatory and some aspects are dealt with cursorily. The first chapter, *An Historical Study of Trap Development*, is one of the best and leaves the reader thirsty for more details, as does the one on *Modern Manufacture of Traps*, with its account of the life of Sewell Newhouse and the Oneida community in New York State in the early nineteenth century.

Foot traps, pitfalls, leg-hold and cage traps, foot snares, neck snares, light traps, lobster pots and wildfowl decoys are all here, but there is overmuch reliance on traditional lore and many statements that a practical trapper would dispute. There is much of interest but it is not always critically assessed, and there are a number of factual errors, including inaccurate dates and titles of some Acts of Parliament.

HARRY V. THOMPSON

Persistent Pesticides in the Environment, by Clive A. Edwards. Butterworth, £5.

With the volume of pesticide literature reaching almost unmanageable proportions any attempt to survey even one aspect is welcome. This short work is mainly concerned to collect and assess the comparative data on residues of persistent pesticides in the environment, ranging from the earth, air and water, through the living organisms from soil fauna and flora to the vertebrates, including man. It is admittedly incomplete, but it does cover a remarkable amount of data, often presented in helpful summary tables, and there is a useful bibliography. More briefly, it examines the possible effects of these residues and here it is less satisfactory. Thus it barely touches on the mass of research dealing with declines in some bird populations, and gives an incomplete account of the significant field and laboratory work linking the

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persistent pesticides with reduced egg-shell thickness in certain species.

The increasing restrictions on the use of organochlorine pesticides in many developed countries are described, but it is pointed out that total world use is still increasing, with, in 1967, the US exporting 80 per cent of its production of DDT, much of it to the underdeveloped countries, where, as this survey clearly shows, there has been virtually no research on pesticide residues or their effects. Dr. Edwards concludes that while the spread of these chemicals into all parts of the environment must be a cause for anxiety, the present situation is not too serious, a conclusion that appears to give too little weight to their effects in enormous areas of the world where usage is increasing and controls almost non-existent. There is now an urgent need for the international agricultural and health organisations to review their approach to such environmental contaminants.

STANLEY CRAMP

Reptiles of Oklahoma, by Robert G. Webb. Bailey Bros. & Swinfen, £4.50; US \$8.95.

This regional study contains keys to identification with diagrams and maps, a review of previous collections and reports, and an account of the relationship between flora and geography, and the distribution of reptiles. There is a good bibliography. This specialised (but rather highly-priced) book can be recommended as an authoritative survey of the subject.

A. d'A. BELLAIRS

A Discussion on the Results of the Royal Society Expedition to Aldabra 1967-8. Organised by T.S. Westoll and D.R. Stoddart. *Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. Lond. B*, vol.260 (no. 836), £19.00, US \$50.

All conservationists know about the recent successful struggle to save the unique atoll of Aldabra from military devastation. The Royal Society led in this; and it has become responsible, with the aid of a government grant, for organising research into the rich scientific treasures of the island. This 654-page volume of papers by various authors, presented at a discussion in March 1969, records the results of the first six phases of the Royal Society Expedition; further phases have followed, and there is now a permanent research station.

There are papers on the geomorphology of the atoll, the climate, and the tides of the lagoon; then others on marine ecology, and several on the vegetation. Most of the rest are concerned with the fauna, including crustaceans, molluscs and insects. One is on the vast population of the giant tortoise, another on the sea turtles, and another on the bats (the only known land mammals). The birds are treated under several heads. Of the resident land birds there are 6-7 ciconiiform species and 13-14 'land birds proper'; the latter include the new warbler *Nesillas aldabranus* and the white-throated rail, the last surviving flightless bird in the western Indian Ocean and here the subject of a separate paper. Other contributions deal with the migrant waders and with the ecology of the breeding sea-birds; the populations of the red-footed booby and the frigate-birds (two species) are estimated at 12,000 and 30,000 respectively. More general papers include remarks on problems of conservation.

A. LANDSBOROUGH THOMSON