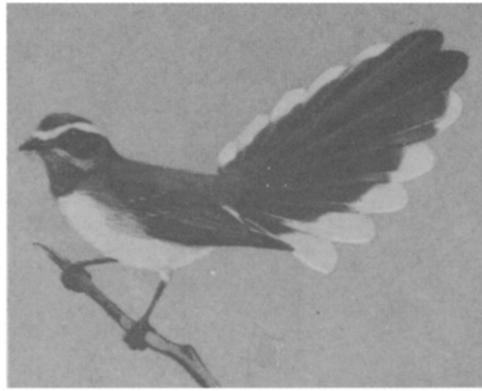


WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL
FLYCATCHER, from the
colour picture in the Indian
bird handbook reviewed here



Both text and illustrations continue to be of a very high standard. The artists represented in the current volume are Paul Barruel, C. J. F. Coombs, D. V. Cowen, A. M. Hughes, J. P. Irani, David Reid-Henry, R. A. Richardson, and Robert Scholz. A new feature, of great help to the reader, is the alphabetical list of families, on the end-papers—Latin at the beginning, English at the end—showing in which volume each is to be found.

All owners of A. W. Johnson's *Birds of Chile* will welcome his supplement, though perhaps with a sad look at the price (nearly 4p per page), which reflects our current roaring inflation. Like the book the supplement also covers adjacent regions of Argentina, Bolivia and Peru. There are important contributions from J. D. Goodall, W. R. Millie, George Moffett and (on south-west Peru) R. A. Hughes. Twenty hitherto unrecorded species from south-west Peru are included and twenty-two for Chile, the latter including a conebill new to science, *Coniristrum tamarugensis*, which is illustrated in colour. This was discovered as recently as December 1970 by Dr. Jürgen Rottman. A special visit to Easter Island enabled the avifauna of that remote speck of Chilean territory to be brought up to date.

Mr. Belcher's attractive paintings will appeal even to the millions who will never set foot on Fiji. The excellent notes are contributed by the New Zealand ornithologist, R. B. Sibson.

RICHARD FITTER

Insects of the World, by Walter Linsenmaier, translated by Leigh E. Chadwick, McGraw-Hill, £6.50.

This rather unusual book is a popular account of the structural and ecological diversity of insects, of which the author estimates there are more than one million known species. Some recent predictions have suggested that large numbers of species will be lost before they can be even described and named, so enormous is the impact of modern man on natural ecosystems. The outstanding quality and number of the book's illustrations give some idea of what could be lost if such predictions are accurate. The author shows himself aware of the importance of conservation but does not emphasise this rather new aspect of entomology. Photographs, delicate line drawings and striking paintings, all the work of the author, are profusely used to demonstrate the almost unparalleled variety of insect form, colour and pattern. The blended artistic and scientific, although popular, approach is a successful one, particularly of course, in the treatment of such subjects as mimicry and warning coloration.

The text suffers somewhat by comparison with the illustrations. As there is no table of contents, but a plethora of chapter and section headings in different type-faces, the book is difficult and irritating to use, and the short introductory chapters on aspects of entomology such as anatomy, life histories and coloration are uneven, the one on classification being

particularly unsatisfactory. Most of the book is an account of the different insect groups, in which many fascinating details of structure, coloration and ecology are given, and on the whole, a good balance is struck between scientific accuracy and popular appeal. Separate sections on social and water insects complete the work.

This is a book to be dipped into rather than read, but the author's superb paintings and drawings will remain in the memory when the text is forgotten. Unfortunately the price puts it beyond the reach of many naturalists.

M. G. MORRIS

The Oxford Book of Vertebrates, by **Marion Nixon**; illustrations by **Derek Whiteley**. Oxford University Press, £3.50.

This latest volume in the series of four by the same publisher completes an attractive survey of the animal life of Great Britain. The present book deals with cyclostomes, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals including the aquatic mammals, such as the seals, dolphins and whales. Fifty-seven of the 96 coloured plates are devoted to fish. Opposite each colour plate detailed information on each of the species illustrated has been ably summarised. The coverage of species is remarkably complete, even to the extent of including the humantin (shark), a rare straggler to our shores, only one of which has been taken since 1877; and the blue whale, which reaches the latitude of Shetland sometimes in July and August but of which only four have been stranded on British coasts since records were started in 1913. It is useful, also, to have details and illustrations of introduced species in all groups.

The colour plates are not as successful as in earlier volumes. In the review copy a sickly green frequently obtrudes in the background or in the colouring of the animal, as in the smooth newt, the back of which is emerald green, a shade not seen in nature and certainly not the olive green mentioned in the text.

At the end of the book is a helpful classification of the vertebrates, a geological time-scale to show when the main groups first appeared in the fossil record, a general account of the vertebrates of the British Isles, a good glossary and a list of sources of further information. This volume will be a most useful reference book; in conjunction with its companion volumes it makes a valuable library on the British fauna generally.

JOHN CLEGG

Neuginea, by **T. Schultze-Westrum**. Kümmerly & Frey, S.Fr.48.

Dr Schultze-Westrum, a geologist and anthropologist as well as a zoologist, spent 18 months in Papua New Guinea collecting the material on which this book is based. In a remarkably short space he presents a clear and eminently readable outline of the country's enormously rich flora and fauna as well as its fascinating people, and the all too familiar pressures and problems which threaten the future wellbeing of both. With the 83 pages of text there are 95 of stupendous photographs, each with an explanatory paragraph. The author shows how the problems of the people and the wildlife cannot be regarded separately, and how the immediate creation of appropriate national parks (6 areas are proposed) could benefit both these and the country's economy. It is a great pity that this interesting book is not yet available in English, but the photographs may tempt even non-readers of German.

NICOLA BOISSARD