

ivory, especially large tusks, from the hinterland to trade for luxury goods with the Sultanate of Oman and with India. Man certainly for long had had a disrupting influence on the elephants of the hinterland—now partly in the Tsavo Park.

The author's dictum that man is 'detested by all wild animals of the animal kingdom' and 'hated by all other forms of life', is puzzling as well as anthropomorphic and curiously inconsistent when related to the behaviour of her 'orphans', large and small.

C. R. S. PITMAN

The Evergreen Forests of Malawi, by J. D. Chapman and F. White. Commonwealth Forestry Institute, University of Oxford, 1970. £3 or \$7.50.

Malawi is a small country by African standards but it has a delightful variety of topography and plant and animal life within its borders. This book by two dedicated botanists is a detailed and painstaking account of the small patches of evergreen forest which are scattered throughout the country, mainly in the uplands.

This is a specialists' book, for the topographers and serious students of Africa's vegetation; animals and birds are only mentioned in a short section under *The Environment, Human Activities* as 'other animals', which begins with the surprising statement that 'almost nothing is known'; this is far from the case. A chapter on fauna of evergreen forests would have been a valuable addition; the bird life is of particular interest.

Part 1 deals with the environment, human influences, plant geography and classification; Part 2 is a detailed description of the forests. It is an interesting fact that certain species of trees which occur in southern Africa reach their northern limits in Malawi while other species reach their southern limits there,—an indication that Malawi is a meeting-place of the southern and eastern African floras.

The description of the forests is well-illustrated with several profile diagrams of their composition and structure; perhaps the most pleasing feature is the sixty excellent black and white photographs of the forests taken by Chapman which give an excellent idea of what they look like. Of considerable interest are those of the Mlanje cedar *Widdringtonia whytei*, a species which reaches its northern limit on Mlanje Mountain and which is a truly magnificent tree in its setting of mist-shrouded peaks.

There is a good list of references but the maps are poor; one on a very small scale shows the position of mountains and upland areas in Malawi, and the other the phytogeographical regions of Africa. A large-scale folding map seems to be a serious omission from an otherwise admirable work which is a valuable contribution to the study of Africa's vegetation and forests.

RICHARD WILLAN

Biogeography and Ecology of Madagascar, by G. Richard-Vindard and R. Battistini. Junk, The Hague, DG 190.

Any naturalist with a special interest in Madagascar must have wished for an authoritative reference source giving both a concise account of the physical characteristics of the island and a general description of the flora and fauna. Richard-Vindard and Battistini have collected a well-balanced set of papers written by some of the foremost French natural scientists concerned with Madagascar, and their volume provides a useful guide which should adequately meet this need. There are contributions on the landscape, geology, climatology, soils, vegetation and animal life (insects, arachnids, terrestrial molluscs, fishes, reptiles, birds, mammals). In addition there is ample discussion of the serious problems of erosion and deforestation and

other key aspects relating to conservation. Mahe's paper on the subfossils (remains of recently extinct, large terrestrial vertebrates) aptly shows just how much of the fascinating animal life of Madagascar has already been lost for good. Finally, there are two papers on the relationship between man and his environment in Madagascar, one of which (by Brygoo) deals specifically with human disease. In terms of range and content, there is no doubt that this a valuable reference work.

The presentation of the text is, however, poor. It is difficult to understand why the editors went to the trouble of having some of the papers translated into English, whilst others were left in the original French. The resulting mixture falls precisely between two stools. The bulk of the articles have been translated through an agency, with the result that there are numerous errors and distortions which a specialist would have avoided. The text is often turgid and stilted, and one can clearly recognise the original French sentence construction and even most of the vocabulary throughout most of the text. Some papers have no bibliographies; others utilise a variety of systems (numerical, alphabetical etc.). Finally, there are numerous printing errors and stylistic faults (such as inadvertent retention of French figure labels and terminology in some of the translated articles). Overall, the book suffers greatly from inadequate editing; in view of the ambitious price, one might have expected better quality.

R. D. MARTIN

Breeding Birds of Britain and Ireland, by John Parslow. Poyser, Berkhamsted, Herts., £3.60.

Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, Vol. 7, by Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. Oxford University Press, £8.

Supplement to the Birds of Chile, by A. W. Johnson. D. A. Robb, 3 Muirdown Avenue, London, SW14, £4.00.

Birds of Fiji in Colour, painted by W. J. Belcher. Collins, £1.90.

It is good to have an important new book on British birds to mingle with the many about birds overseas. John Parslow's material is new only in book form, for most of it appeared in *British Birds* during 1967–68. Here it is brought up to date with a summary chapter of events since 1967, and constitutes the most important survey of the breeding status of British birds since W. B. Alexander and David Lack published theirs in the same journal in 1944. Striking changes have taken place in the past thirty years. One bird, the collared dove, which not one British bird watcher in a thousand had heard of in 1944, has become a widespread and common breeding species. An astonishing number of others have either bred for the first time—snowy owl, firecrest, short-toed treecreeper and bluethroat—or returned after a period of extinction—osprey, avocet, ruff and black-tailed godwit. It was high time, therefore, for the new look, which John Parslow has ably accomplished. One important new feature of the work in its book form is the series of maps, and I was especially glad to see the overly neglected group of introduced species, such as the wood and ruddy ducks, bobwhite quail and three species of pheasant, adequately treated here. It is encouraging, too, that several of the hitherto secret localities can now be revealed, and that we can refer in print to the glories of the Ouse Washes in the Fenland.

I have little to add to what I have already written in *Oryx*, most recently on page 126 of the last issue, about that magnificent enterprise, the *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*. The current volume is the third to be devoted to the great order of song or perching birds, Passeriformes, and carries us from the babblers to the flycatchers, both of which sub-families are extremely well represented in the subcontinent.