habitat of the walia, gelada and klipspringer and a description of their ecological separation.

The book is slightly marred by overcomplex presentation of the data and by a confused use of the terms 'factor' and 'parameter' in chapter 8 and throughout. Nevertheless this is essential reading for wildlife biologists and ecologists, and the non-mathematical descriptive sections are of potential interest to a wide public, especially those interested in the flora and fauna of Africa.

PAUL MUNTON

Rare and Endangered Plants of New Zealand, by **D.R. Given.** A.H. & A.W. Reed, $22.95.

Many books have been written about rare and endangered animals, particularly birds and mammals, with the aim of stimulating public interest and concern. The plight of plants has been less well publicised although there have been several recent red data compilations at an international and national level.

David Given successfully brings forward another approach to our understanding of the subject. He points out that plant species in New Zealand (as elsewhere) have evolved and colonised without man's assistance and are an irreplaceable part of New Zealand's heritage. Whether they become a vanishing heritage or survive and prosper is, however, in man's hands. The challenge is great, for it is estimated that one in ten of New Zealand's native plant species can be described as at risk and simple human ignorance is often responsible. Given has examined broad habitats describing threatened plants in coastal areas, open and rocky places, wetlands, forest and scrub, islands and alpine regions. The effectiveness of this approach obviously rests on a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the floristics and ecology of the vegetation, and David Given has a familiarity with the New Zealand vegetation which must be the envy of many. He has been able to describe the occurrence and distribution of threatened plants in a habitat context and clearly defines the threats and how they might be ameliorated.

One problem facing workers anxious to stimulate public interest is the extent to which detailed information on localities is provided. It is important to encourage people to find new occurrences but there are all too many examples of unscrupulous collectors using such information to the decimation of the plant, and Given has adopted the policy of not providing detailed site records; distribution is given only in general terms.

The book contains valuable chapters on the concepts of rarity and strategies for survival. The final chapter 'The Personal Challenge' presents the author's own philosophy on conservation, and clearly reveals that David Given is not only a leading authority on rare and threatened New Zealand plants but a dedicated conservationist.

JOHN LEIGH

The Biological Aspects of Rare Plant Conservation, edited by **Hugh Synge.** Wiley, £30.00.

These proceedings of an international conference, held at Cambridge in July 1980, have been brought through to publication with commendable speed. It grew out of the concern of taxonomists at the increasing speed of extinction of rare species, and included ecologists, phytosociologists and practising conservationists.

The first quarter of the text is a survey and assessment of rare and threatened species, with contributions from North America, the USSR, India, Australia, New Zealand and Europe. A shorter section on the crucial topic of Tropical Forests is followed by a series of papers on the problems of what really constitutes rarity and how rare plant populations can be monitored, and a further ten papers on ecological studies of rare