

## REVIEWS

BRITISH MAMMALS. L. HARRISON MATTHEWS. Collins, 25s.

Almost every book hitherto published on British mammals has given a separate account of each species arranged according to its systematic classification. This "catalogue" method of presentation has some obvious advantages: all the information about a particular mammal can be found under its own heading, at least in the larger works, with the result that they contain a succession of monographs that can be referred to easily. But the great disadvantage of a systematic treatise is that the subject as a whole may tend to be obscured by an author's preoccupation with descriptions of individual species and their habits.

In the present book (which is published in the "New Naturalist" series), Dr. Matthews, who is a distinguished zoologist and the Director of the Zoological Society of London, has adopted the synthetical approach to British mammalogy. Broadly speaking, he devotes a chapter to the exposition of each Order except for the bats, whales and dolphins, about which the general reader will usually require more detailed information owing to his lack of familiarity with them. The author has therefore treated these systematically; but in doing so he has not allowed himself to ignore the wood in favour of the trees. His chapters give an excellent review of British mammalogy and incorporate most of the outstanding contributions made to it during the past seventy years, with particular emphasis on modern scientific research. Sources are fully acknowledged in a comprehensive bibliography so that the reader who wishes to follow up some brief reference in the text can do so without difficulty.

The book is designed for the general naturalist rather than the professional zoologist and therefore contains few technical terms except those that can be readily understood by an intelligent reader. Dr. Matthews' explanations of anatomical and biological processes or functions are always lucid and free from what is sometimes called "writing down" to suit the layman.

There are sixteen reproductions of photographs in colour—some of which are pleasing, others less so—and nearly seventy photographs in black and white. Most of the numerous line drawings in the text are the author's own work and have been executed with the same skill and attention to detail shown throughout his thoughtful and thought-provoking essay.

M. B.

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