

Aggregate works of this kind cannot be uniform in quality, but in this case it is the many highs rather than the few lows that invite attention. Most of the papers show massive erudition and will form quite outstanding sources of information for many years to come, in spite of an unfortunate editorial decision, or oversight, which left all but three of the otherwise very useful lists of references in alphabetically random order – most irritating for the enquiring student. What makes the book particularly useful is its index, which contains references not only to oak phenomena in general but to every related and associated species mentioned in the text, though not those in the numerous and lengthy species lists. The latter can be located by looking up group words such as Lichens, Birds or Epiphytes, but sadly not Butterflies, Beetles or Moths, for which there seem to be no lists, though plenty of individual mention.

Although there is nothing new in the concept of oak as a tremendously hospitable and provident wildlife host, this book is the first to bring all the material together and to relate it to the nature of the host itself. It provides a powerful illustration of the FPS principle that preservation of the vegetative habitat is the key to preservation of fauna, though only two of the papers concern themselves directly with silviculture or conservation of oak woodland. In the latter, a tentative and highly arguable case is made for around forty hectares being considered the “minimum area” of oak-bearing wood that is capable of sustaining the whole oakwood ecosystem to the upper levels of the food-chain. In brief, the book is thoroughly worthwhile and deserves the attention of all British naturalists and reference libraries.

H. C. DAWKINS

The World of the Gray Squirrel, by **Frederick S. Barkalow Jr** and **Monica Shorten**. J. B. Lippincott \$5.95

The North American grey squirrel, since its introduction a century ago, has largely replaced the native red squirrel in most of England and Wales. It is thus appropriate that the life and times of the grey squirrel should be chronicled by two devoted squirrel watchers – one American and the other English. Both authors have studied the Carolina shadetail in their own and each other's countries, and have presented, in straightforward readable prose which is both serious and wryly humorous, the essence of their own observations, over some 30 years, in the context of cognate research much of which they have stimulated. The procedure of following the life of a female squirrel throughout the year provides opportunities for describing breeding, feeding, early development, pelage changes, vocalisations, movements, scent-marking, and those intricacies of behaviour which need further research for their full elucidation.

From the dense forests of eighteenth-century North America, an abundance of squirrels menaced the settlers' crops, but the squirrels were also a valuable food resource and a legendary training ground for sharpshooters. Although habitat changes have reduced the numbers, the grey squirrel is still the prime game animal of West Virginia; three and a half million are killed annually in North Carolina, and in the USA as a whole it is the third most important game species.

But the charm of this book is in its felicitous phrasing: “The days of spring are the gray squirrel's salad days . . . Woods where the wind has blustered are spiked with buds, and sappy food will soon be plentiful – the sooner the better, for buried food may be getting scarce”; “Now the woods are leafy mazes of sunlight and shadow. The transformation has been going on gradually throughout the spring, but go away for a while and on returning you will find a new world”.

HARRY V. THOMPSON