

which is in a nature reserve, is far more vulnerable than most because it is situated in sand dunes instead of the more usual marshy areas, and therefore needs management; since the study, foxes have had to accept some discouragement.

H. N. SOUTHERN

The Oxford Book of Birds, by Donald Watson and Bruce Campbell.
Oxford University Press, 35s.

Confined to British birds, there is no need to compare this with existing books, for it stands on its own feet very adequately, and will be used and enjoyed by many who already own and use other famous field-guides, and also attract many new bird addicts.

The excellent plates by Donald Watson, on pages large enough to give attractive pictures, each have at least four species, many of them in several plumages and some in flight where the flight pattern is a distinctive feature. The only important point where the book seems to fall short is in the captions to the pictures, which are often confusing and even misleading. Thus on plate 83 there is nothing to indicate that one of the birds shown in flight is a stone curlew; the caption appears to make it a little bustard.

In the text, which is a model of ingenious compression, Bruce Campbell has managed in the restricted space to give all the essential information on identification, field notes, distribution, breeding biology, migration and much more. An ingenious shorthand gives the months by number in which each species is to be seen in Britain, the breeding period and song months, and there are useful chapters on classification, anatomy, flight, behaviour and breeding. There are one or two mistakes or inaccuracies: the bill of the Caspian tern in winter is not normally black, and there is no mention of the most characteristic feature of the great white heron, its bright yellow bill, but generally speaking the text is meticulously accurate, and the whole book is remarkable value for the price.

H. G. ALEXANDER

Biology of Birds, by W. E. Lanyon. Nelson, 21s.

In view of the recent spate of semi-popular bird biology books, emanating chiefly from America, one might well ask whether another is really justified, especially when it has to follow such excellent volumes as Welty's *The Life of Birds* and the Darlings' *Bird*. The excuse is that Lanyon's book, published in America in 1963, has been adapted to British readership; the credit for this is given to Sir Gavin de Beer on the dust jacket, and to Mr. J. D. MacDonald in the author's preface. This is but the first of many inconsistencies in the book, most of which appear to have arisen from the substitution of Old World bird species for their New World equivalents without the necessary changes in the context.

For example, we are told that the marsh warbler breeds over the entire United States, but not in Europe or Asia; that all but one of the sixty-three species of warblers (by context Sylviidae) are confined to the New World; that willow warblers are double-brooded and polygamous, and so on.

Dr. Lanyon illustrates the need for scientific names by citing the confusion caused by the common name "redwing", which has different connotations in the Old and New Worlds; elsewhere in the book he uses the terms "warbler" and "blackbird" freely without making it clear in many cases whether he is using the American or the British terminology. I cannot recommend the British edition of this book.

P. R. EVANS