

ever-changing shape and area of the colonies' foraging territories makes fascinating reading. Having elected to provide a section on the evolution of social behaviour, he might well have taken the opportunity to discuss the role of kin selection; instead he is content with an account of what might have happened, without reference to the how and why of the matter. More rigorous editing should have eliminated such infelicities of style as '*Formica transcaucasica* . . . is a specialist bog liver'.

The sixteen pages of black and white photographs together with two colour plates by Gordon Riley, are of a uniformly high standard, and there are distribution maps, compiled by K.E.J. Barrett, for all British indigenous species. This book complements that of J.H. Sudd (1967), *An Introduction to the Behaviour of Ants*, and is a worthy addition to the New Naturalist series.

CHRISTOPHER O'TOOLE

The Herons of the World, by James Hancock and Hugh Elliott, with paintings by Robert Gillmor and Peter Hayman. London Editions, £45.

The Gannet, by Bryan Nelson. Poyser, Berkhamsted, £8.

British Thrushes, by Eric Simms. Collins, £6.50.

In the nineteenth century a fine tradition of large-scale ornithological monographs arose, probably originated by John Gould. Such colourful groups as kingfishers, rollers and jacamars were described in this way. It is good to see a return to this tradition in recent works on the birds of prey, the parrots, the rails and now, in this handsome folio volume, the herons. European, and especially British, birdwatchers, as Roger Peterson points out in his introduction, are liable to think in terms of 'the heron', as the grey heron used to be rather insularly called in *The Handbook of British Birds*. But American, and even southern European, birdwatchers have many more to hand, and will find this volume doubly welcome.

Hérons being large and conspicuous birds, though bitterns and some other species do skulk in swamps and dense vegetation, they have been much studied in recent years. So the authors had a huge mass of fresh information to assimilate, especially with such well known and widespread species as the grey heron and the cattle egret. They have done their task well, and provided admirable summaries for each species under the headings of distribution, migration, habitat, general appearance, identification, behaviour and taxonomy. There are also good introductory chapters on classification, plumage and moult, breeding, feeding, migration and dispersal, and conservation. For the Palaearctic species it is interesting to compare the entries with those in Volume I of the new *Handbook*. The latter has no literary pretensions; it is a straightforward and very business-like summary. *Hérons of the World*, however, is pleasantly discursive, and can be read, not just consulted.

In such a book the illustrations are as important as the text, and here Robert Gillmor scores the highest marks with his clear and incisive portraits, that stand out of the page as living birds. Peter Hayman's style is less sharply defined and has a faint aura of the Audubon and Gould era, when bird illustrations were not expected to look natural. In a sense it is a pity we could not have had all the paintings by one artist—either would have done the job splendidly.

Bryan Nelson has made himself Mr Gannet (perhaps a kinder appellation than Mr Booby). Starting with a stint on the Bass Rock a good many years ago, he has probably now spent more time studying the members of the family *Sulidae* than anybody else before or since. The present book is a kind of appendage to his recent major work on the

whole family, and deals only with his first love, the North Atlantic gannet. It is an excellent summary of what is known of its habits and ecology, much of it due to the author himself, and will be welcomed by many who are primarily interested in British or European birds and would find the majestic price of his larger book a deterrent.

Eric Simms's New Naturalist volume on British thrushes is squarely in the mid-twentieth century tradition of summarising the voluminous information that now exists for some of the commonest birds in the British Isles. He deals fully with the six thrushes of the genus *Turdus*, on three of which he has himself done detailed field work, especially around his North London home. The lesser thrushes, such as chats, wheatears, robin and nightingale, are dismissed, not unreasonably, in a single chapter. This is the sort of book that ought to be written every twenty years or so for every major group of British birds. There are numerous excellent black and white photographs by Eric Hosking and others.

RICHARD FITTER

Wild Geese, by M.A. Ogilvie. T & D Poyser, £7.80.

Another book from the talented and productive research team of the Wildfowl Trust. Malcolm Ogilvie, who has been with the Trust since 1960, follows his *Ducks of Britain and Europe* (1975) with an equally readable and competent companion volume. Here, in a text which has a similar layout to his book on ducks, he covers the geese of the world, apart from one species, the Hawaiian Goose, omitted on the grounds that it is in many ways an aberrant species and is the subject of a monograph which (we all hope) is about to be published. For a volume which rightly emphasises comparisons between species this was, I think, a mistaken decision. However, this is a minor quibble, for the book is an excellent compilation and précis of the vast amount of work that has been done. What is known about geese is here, in chapters on classification, identification, ecology, breeding, status, distribution, population dynamics, migrations, exploitation and conservation. Much of the work has been done in America and Europe, and where there are gaps in our knowledge it is mainly with Asian species. The text is supported by extremely good maps, easy-to-follow tables and index, line drawings, and 16 colour plates. I regret the omission of references in the text, for though there is a selected bibliography of some 200 references at the end, it is difficult and often impossible to check the information given.

There have been at least five other major works dealing with geese and other wildfowl in the last four years, but comparisons would be invidious and unfair for they are aimed at different audiences. Suffice to say if you have a sum approaching £100, buy the lot. If not, and geese are your particular interest, this volume is excellent value.

PETER OLNEY

The Art of Survival, by Colin Willock. Deutsch, £6.50.

Television, like the wild world outside, can be a savage habitat at times, red in tooth and claw. But thanks to the consistent excellence of Colin Willock's wildlife programmes, Anglia TV's *Survival* series has secured a permanent niche in the ratings pyramid, and earned over 30 awards in the process.

For nearly two decades Colin Willock has been scripting and producing *Survival* specials for TV. His first film focused on the wildlife of London. Since then he has worked on all kinds of creatures from geckos to humpback whales, and helped to make places such as Aldabra, Chitawan, Okavango and the Serengeti as familiar as the pavements of WC1. Now, with 300 films behind him, he has become *Survival's* chronicler. His book is basically the saga of a dedicated bunch of cameramen and women, and the extraordinary risks they take to bring the animal world to our TV screens. By virtue of