

format and the striking jacket suggest a "popular" work, there is nothing elementary or superficial about it; and considering the lavish illustrations, it is amazing how much material about the structure, senses and habits of cats, great and small, has been fitted into a comparatively slim volume. Not the least instructive are the two final chapters, "Cats and Men" and "The Future for Cats," the latter reminding us of the dangers which face so many living creatures today. It is typical of the author, and also very appropriate, that part of the proceeds from the sales of this book go to the World Wildlife Fund. If the other works in this special series, under the able editorship of Dr. Bruce Campbell, are as good as the first, it is nice to think that naturalists and the Fund will both derive much benefit from them.

MAXWELL KNIGHT

**The Sea Otter**, by **I. I. Barabash-Nikiporov, V. U. Reshetkin, and N. K. Shidlovskaya**. Translated by A. Birron and Z. S. Cole. Edited by P. Cohen. National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C.: Israel Programme for Scientific Translations, Jerusalem. \$6.00.

**Lake Baikal and its Life**, by **M. Kozhov**. Junk, The Hague. Guilders 35.00.

These two works by Russian zoologists are of great interest and value, and their appearance in English is highly welcome as so much Russian work is inaccessible to those who cannot read the language.

"The Sea Otter" is an exhaustive monograph on the morphology, anatomy and biology of this very interesting marine carnivore, all the more interesting because in the course of half a century it has, through being protected, recovered in numbers from near extinction to what promises to be a viable population. There are several herds at various points in its former range which extended all round the shores of the north Pacific from Japan to California. The studies on sea otters reported here were made on the Commander Islands off the coast of Kamchatka. Here the diet of the animals consists of sea-urchins 59 per cent, molluscs 23 per cent with fish and crustacea making up only 16.7 per cent. In feeding on sea-urchins the otter scoops up five or six, or even ten, from the bottom near the shore and brings them to the surface where it floats on its back stowing the catch on its chest while it eats its prey one at a time. In the Commander Islands the Russian observers never saw the sea otters using stones as anvils for breaking the sea-urchins or mollusc shells as has been reported of the Californian herd. The book concludes with an account of the introduction and acclimatisation of sea otters on the Murman coast and with a section on the feeding and care of sea otters in captivity. The translators have achieved a very readable text though very occasionally one wonders if a technical term has gone astray, for example "octopus" which might perhaps in this context mean "squid." There is a good bibliography, both of Russian and other works. The photographic process of producing and printing the book has resulted in considerable degradation of the quality of the half-tone illustrations.

Lake Baikal is the deepest and one of the oldest lakes in the world. The pronounced endemism and specific wealth of its flora and fauna has made it of high interest to biologists. Professor Kozhov's book gives a wide survey of what is known about this remarkable sheet of water which he knows intimately, having been for many years head of the Biologo-Geographical Institute and the Baikal Biological Station of Irkutsk University. In its long history Baikal has communicated with different biogeographical regions and received immigrants from them. One of the most interesting

immigrants from the north is the Baikal seal, a close relative of the Arctic ringed seal. The book is illustrated with line drawings, maps, diagrams, half-tones and three coloured plates; it has a good index and an extensive bibliography. Professor Kozhov has produced a fascinating account of the history of life of one of the most interesting biological regions of the world.

L. HARRISON MATTHEWS

**The Natural History of Flies**, by Harold Oldroyd. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 50s.

**Centipedes of the British Isles**, by E. H. Eason, Warne, 63s.

**Ten Little Housemates**, by Karl von Frisch. Pergamon Press, 12s. 6d.

The opening volume of a new series, "The World Naturalist," is a splendid piece of popular scientific writing by a leading expert from the British Museum (Natural History), most readable and an excellent precedent for its successors. By "flies," of course, experts mean not just the common house fly and bluebottle, but also all the insects entomologists call Diptera or two-winged flies. The book thus surveys the life and human impact of such diverse insects as mosquitoes, midges, daddy-long-legs, clegs or horse-flies, hoverflies and those terrible pests of farm stock, bots and warble flies.

Messrs. Warne are best known for their admirable "Wayside and Woodland" series, on which all the best British naturalists were brought up, and Dr. Eason's book on centipedes, profusely illustrated with line drawings instead of plates, represents a new departure. The first comprehensive and systematic account of British centipedes and their identification, it describes clearly and succinctly our thirty-two native and eleven introduced species, and will, one hopes, lead to a renewed interest in a group which, if not exactly neglected, has never suffered from a superfluity of students.

Professor von Frisch's little book on the arthropods particularly associated with man now appears in a new English edition. He writes chattily but accurately about the natural history of house flies, gnats, fleas, bed bugs, lice, clothes moths, cockroaches, silver-fish, spiders and ticks. Of these, only the silver-fish are generally harmless to man, and even they can sometimes be too much of a good thing.

R. S. R. FITTER

**Checklist of the Birds of Thailand**, by Herbert G. Deignan. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., \$1.00.

Thailand is one of the several big countries of South-east Asia where there are no natural history museum, no decent natural history books, and in several cases even no naturalists! This is one of the great difficulties we face in getting things done to conserve the fauna and flora even at the simplest level. Virtually all the pressure and all the interested personnel are from "ex-patriates", outsiders, non-Asians. In exercising such pressure they have left it very late. Much which could easily have been achieved in 1954 has become exceedingly difficult in 1964—coming from outside. Herbert Deignan is one of the few outsiders who has steadily devoted himself to the natural history of this area, and to the birds of Thailand in particular. Now, at last, he has given us a proper scientific background to the ornithology of a large, exciting region. A previous nominal list of Thai birds published in *Ibis* in 1920 listed 732 forms: this checklist lists 1,173.