

Ecology and Biogeography in India, edited by M. S. Mani. Junk, The Hague, DG 190.

This is virtually an encyclopaedia of India's natural history. The physical features of the entire country are described, with chapters by specialists on geology, climate, flora and fauna of all the main areas. Nothing so comprehensive has been published before; as a reference book it will be invaluable. The photographs are of exceptionally high quality, as are both paper and printing. Each chapter has a most useful bibliography, and there is a species index at the end.

Unfortunately the editing is very faulty. There is no economy in the use of words, facts are piled one upon another with little attempt to connect them together in relevant fashion, and there is much repetition. Spelling mistakes are numerous, and there is no consistency in the spelling of names. In the chapter on Vanishing Species, the attempt to estimate the present range of animals to within decimal points of their former territory is nothing short of ludicrous. Writing about the pink-headed duck (whose common English name is not given in the text at all), the author says 'the present distribution represents 0.63 per cent of its former range, if at all the species still remains'. Referring to the captive breeding projects of the white-winged wood duck, the author writes of 'the International Wildlife Reserve Centre' in Britain—what is meant presumably is the Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge, where Sir Peter Scott has successfully bred these birds.

Professor Mani has repeatedly emphasised the rather obvious fact that biogeographical evolution cannot be comprehended in terms of individual species alone, but that the physical conditions and the ecosystems of large contiguous areas have to be taken into account in understanding the status of species at any point of time. He seems to be particularly hard on Dr S. L. Hora, the proponent of the Satpura thesis, for suggesting that because the same kind of hill-stream fish exists in Assam and the Western Ghats, there must in earlier ages have been a continuous mountain range connecting the Himalayas, the Satpura and the Sahyadris in western India. According to Dr Mani, Dr Hora has completely ignored the geological evidence, but, strangely, he makes no mention of Dr Salim Ali's work on birds which also supports the Satpura thesis. The fairy bluebird, the great Indian hornbill, several groups of laughing thrushes and some spider hunters are found in the Western Ghats, and then again only in the Himalayas. Whether Drs Hora and Salim Ali have gone to 'the grotesque extent of refitting the geomorphology of India' to suit their pet theories, others more qualified than this reviewer will have to decide.

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

Brief Reviews

Key-Word-Index of Wildlife Research, Volume 1 1974, a valuable tool for researchers, indexes 1400 wildlife research papers published in 1973 in a variety of categories—subject, species, author etc. There is a list of journals and details of a copying service. Swiss Wildlife Information Service, University of Zürich, Birchstrasse 95, CH-8050 Zurich, Switzerland. Subscription SF 65 or \$20.00.

Facts about Furs, by Jean F. Vinter (Animal Welfare Institute, PO Box 3650, Washington DC 20007, or RSPCA, Manor House, Horsham, Sussex, 36p), is a revised edition of a booklet published by UFAW in 1957.