

# Book reviews

would find time on Professor Westhoff's thoughtful analysis well spent. Some of the other contributions to Part 1 are less successful partly because the subjects reviewed, such as atmospheric pollution, fire and eutrophication, are now too large to be adequately covered in a short review.

On the whole the essays in Part 2 provide concise and authoritative accounts of the effects of man's activities on the major vegetation zones and habitat types of the earth and it is good to see a contribution on the urban environment by Sakopp and Werner.

Appropriately enough much of Part 3 is concerned with Japan and for European readers the last four chapters provide a valuable introduction to the problems of land use and conservation in that part of the world. On the other hand, the essay on Central Europe by Komars will be found to be disappointing and over-laced with unnecessary jargon. Terms like *synanthropization*, *hemerophilous*, *anthropophyte* and *ephemero-phyte* are really not very illuminating.

The volume is well produced and the editors have clearly worked hard to harmonise the contributions and to produce a coherent whole. There is a great deal of value in this book and it can be recommended to anyone seriously wishing to broaden their horizons and conception of the subject. However, having regard to the price it is more likely to be borrowed than added to the private library.

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## The Natterjack Toad

Trevor Beebee

Oxford University Press, 1983, £9.95

By comparison with the number of books on British birds and mammals there are very few dealing with British amphibians and reptiles. Thus, the appearance of a book dealing with just one species, the natterjack, must warm the hearts of many herpetologists.

Dr Beebee is an active conservationist and a member of the British Herpetological Society

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(BHS) Conservation Committee, so it is not surprising that *The Natterjack Toad* deals as much with conservation aspects as with the animal's biology.

There is an interesting chapter on the natterjack's habitat requirements that reviews much of the European literature, supplementing the rather sparse data from Britain. The conclusion is that the natterjack is closely associated with 'hot' sandy soil and is limited in its distribution to heathlands and sand dunes.

A chapter on the conservation of the natterjack details its decline in recent years, which is mainly due to its dependence on a restricted habitat that has suffered much from human activity in Britain; from urban development and changing farming practices on inland heathland sites to development of golf courses and holiday camps along the coastal sand dunes. Now only 18 dune sites and two heathland sites are known to remain in use by the natterjack. A note of optimism is indicated, however, with the natterjack being given full protection from disturbance under the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act (1975) and the increase in habitat management for the natterjack by the BHS seems to have halted its very rapid decline.

Dr Beebee brings together what information is known on the behaviour and ecology of the natterjack, but these chapters are rather sparse on hard facts, as there is still a great need for detailed studies on amphibians in Britain.

Chapters on classification and anatomy round off a complete review of the information currently available on this overlooked animal. There is a final chapter on ideas for amateur studies of amphibians that should fire the imagination of young and old herpetologists alike, although because of the protected nature of the natterjack most of the recommendations for study refer to the commoner British amphibian species.

The book is written in a pleasant style that allows one to gain the facts with little effort. The book will be welcomed by herpetologists and conservationists alike and should be useful to anybody interested in British natural history.

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