

Book Reviews

African Birds of Prey, by Leslie Brown. Collins, £2.25.

Obviously less ambitious than the author's two-volume *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World* (written with Dean Amadon), this book lacks the detailed treatment of individual species, but it contains much that is new, and furthermore includes the nocturnal as well as the diurnal birds of prey – 30 of the former and 90 of the latter. It can be recommended to all interested in birds of prey as a whole. Part I discusses their behaviour, physical adaptations for predation, and their variety. A table lists each species, defines its status and assigns it to one or more of seven habitats, with brief notes on prey preference. Part II (nearly half the book) considers the species in relative detail, dividing them into twelve groups, in which those which perform the same function in nature (not necessarily closely related) are placed together. Some species are still only known from specimens, and one, a forest owlet in Liberia, has not yet even been named.

Part III, the most interesting and novel part, indicates some of the many problems. It is still not known how the Eastern red-footed falcon reaches its winter quarters in south-central Africa, where it occurs in enormous congregations, and the movements of the African races of the black kite are not yet fully understood. Chapters on migrants, ecology and distribution, numbers (with supporting tables of pioneering work on counts in southern and eastern Africa), effects of predation, and breeding seasons lead to the final chapter, on the relationship of birds of prey and man, accompanied by a figure suggesting that 85.4 per cent of diurnal raptors in East Africa are beneficial to man, 11.2 per cent neutral, and only 3.4 per cent harmful.

Illustrations include 23 photographs, a vegetation map of Africa, and a variety of figures, on subjects ranging from binocular vision to the home ranges of seven pairs of fish eagles.

C. W. BENSON

Man and Birds by R. K. Murton. Collins, £2.50.

The Bird Gardener's Book, by Rupert Barrington. Wolfe, £1.50.

Twenty years ago, writing from an exceptionally intimate acquaintance with all our symbiotic or commensal species, E. M. Nicholson contributed a volume to the New Naturalist series dealing with the relationship between Birds and Men (in that order) in its many more or less familiar bearings. Dr Murton approaches the same theme, with close knowledge of all the research and specialised study which has gone on in the interval, primarily from the angle of an economic ornithologist himself engaged in such research. Though he has reversed the order in the title the treatment necessarily covers much the same field. Incidentally one may note that, seventy years ago, W. H. Hudson published his 'Birds and Man' and Dr Murton seems a little hard on that great naturalist and writer in condemning its 'pompous subjectivity and misplaced sentimentality'. We owe much to Hudson. And was Dr Dorst altogether wrong when he said recently that, if we are going to save Nature before it dies, it will be from our hearts rather than our heads that salvation will come?

Dr Murton himself goes along with Nicholson in the conclusion that, with the close and growing similarity between the interests of birds and people in the shaping of the landscape, Britain can be improved as a