

## REVIEWS

MAMMALS OF THE BRITISH ISLES. By PHILIP STREET. Robert Hale. 21s.

This book is a survey of the mammals in Britain and is clearly directed at the field naturalist. It is carefully compiled and well illustrated, and there is much information not usually found in a popular book on animal life. The task of the writer of such a book as this in these days is no light one, because our mammals have been receiving more attention of recent years, and in consequence new details of the lives of some species are being discovered almost every year. This means that an author may well quote another authority in the course of his work, only to find after the publication of his own book that further advances in our knowledge about this or that creature have been made since his manuscript has been sent in.

This applies here, particularly to the mole, about which Dr. and Mrs. Peter Crowcroft produced a monograph in 1960. This work would not have been available to Mr. Street and therefore no surprise should be felt by the reader of the book under review at the absence of any mention of the Crowcrofts' work and investigations. This is no fault of Mr. Street, but it does serve to draw attention to the rapid increase in our knowledge of British mammals—previously a sadly neglected group.

It is somewhat surprising that no reference is made to Dr. Ernest Neal's well-known work on the badger; this is a pity since Mr. Street states that cubs are born in March and April whereas February is the usual month for birth; and the young are coming above ground in April and even in late March.

An unusual feature in this book is the inclusion of a chapter dealing with breeding mammals for their fur—mink and chinchillas. Whatever may be the future of the mink industry in Britain the prospect of anyone making a fortune out of chinchillas seems slight.

Mr. Street has presented us with a diligently compiled account of the natural history of our mammals and it should be of use to amateur naturalists, teachers and pupils.

M. K.

SHELL LIFE ON THE SEASHORE. By PHILIP STREET. Faber and Faber. 18s.

Many naturalists and others interested in wild life find themselves in the guise of beachcombers at some time in their lives. To these Mr. Philip Street's book will offer much enjoyment.

N\*

He describes the very considerable range of mollusc life which can be found around our shores and also adds a chapter on barnacles which, in spite of their shelly exteriors, are in fact crustaceans.

His main account is written in non-technical language and should enable the amateur to identify a great number of seaside molluscs. For those who wish to go one step further there is an appendix on the scientific classification of molluscs. We have got beyond the stage when the naturalists and the lady of leisure were content to collect and perhaps polish dead sea shells and it is refreshing to see that Mr. Street gives much information on the very varied ways in which our living seashore molluscs feed and reproduce.

H. G. V.

**BIRD PORTRAITS IN COLOR.** Two hundred and ninety-five North American species. Minneapolis, 1960 (University of Minnesota Press. Oxford University Press, London). £2 8s.

This is in effect an album of ninety-two colour plates, with a page of explanatory text opposite each; otherwise there are only an introduction and an index. The plates are superb—accurate illustrations of considerable decorative quality, excellently reproduced in seven-colour lithography. The 295 figured species are representative of the avifauna of temperate North America east of the Rocky Mountains and excluding birds purely of the Atlantic seaboard. The plates were in fact originally used as illustrations to the *Birds of Minnesota* by T. S. Roberts, published in two volumes in 1932. They were used in the present form in 1934 and 1936, but all these works have for long been out of print. The text is by the author of the original work, with revision by later hands. The artists are Allan Brooks, G. M. Sutton, W. A. Weber, F. L. Jaquees, W. J. Breckenridge and (in one instance) Louis Aggasiz Fuertes. The whole provides a very attractive introduction to the bird-life of much of the United States and Canada.

L. T.

**WILDLIFE IN AMERICA.** By PETER MATTHIESSEN. Andre Deutsch. 36s.

It is in some ways a pity that this book has been called *Wildlife in America*. That is certainly its subject but it does not suggest fully its real importance for it is, in fact, an historical survey of the white man's tragic influence on wild life in America