

**Flamingos**, edited by **Janet Kear** and **Nicole Duplaix-Hall**. Poyser, Berkhamsted, £8.00.

About 75 per cent of this conveniently sized and nicely produced volume is taken up by the 31 papers presented at the first International Flamingo Symposium, held at Slimbridge in July 1973. Of these, 15 deal with 'populations, ecology and conservation', six with 'flamingos in captivity', three with 'ethology and taxonomy' (the taxonomic item in this odd pair being Theresa Clay's interesting analysis of flamingo feather-lice), and the remaining seven with 'physiology'. Many are very technical, especially of course those of the last group, but are still well worth delving into for such intriguing bits of information as that the pigment canthaxanthin was first isolated not in a flamingo or other pink bird but in the orange-yellow chanterelle!

Most *Oryx* readers will no doubt find the first half of the papers most rewarding, containing as they do a thoroughly up-to-date and expert assessment of existing populations of the six different flamingos, and their conservation implications, which are in many cases still worrying. But increasing public awareness and concern, which many of the contributors to this book, not to mention institutions such as the New Grounds and the zoological gardens, have helped to promote, should eventually ensure that one of the most superb sights in the world will continue to be enjoyed.

An excellent introduction by Sir Peter Scott, not to mention the embellishment of his always highly evocative drawings, over 80 well selected photographs (six of them full-page colour plates), nine mainly statistical appendices and a comprehensive bibliography complete a book which can properly be described as a mine of information, needing some digging but full of riches. Leslie Brown's cautionary remark at the end of his paper is still apt: he calls for 'a readiness on the part of the researcher to jettison every conclusion he has come to after several years of painstaking work in the face of some new manifestation of contrariness on the part of these fascinating and beautiful birds'.

HUGH ELLIOTT

**Threatened Birds of Europe**, by **Robert Hudson**. Macmillan, £4.95.

Attractively produced, with nearly every species illustrated by a colour photograph, mostly full page, this book, despite the criticisms below, is well worth £4.95. About 700 words are devoted to each of 59 birds, in which an outline of the behaviour, appearance, and general characteristics is followed by a detailed analysis of status and a distribution map for the European range. However, information on distribution and status in other parts of the world is extremely scanty, and absent from the maps.

The major criticism concerns the choice of birds. The jacket 'blurb' describes the book as 'an appeal for help for 59 birds threatened with extinction in Europe', but the first species described, the great northern diver, is summarised as 'local, not immediately endangered'. The next two, Cory's shearwater and Leach's petrel, are summarised respectively as 'possibly threatened at some colonies' and 'not immediately endangered'. And the same applies to many others. Even more surprising is the inclusion of species such as spur-winged plover, terek sandpiper and white-rumped swift, birds which may be spreading in Europe. But the greatest omissions are the passerines; not a single species is mentioned. While it may be true that no passerine species is endangered and likely to become extinct, several surely have extremely small and vulnerable populations in Europe, while others, such as the rose-coloured starling, have undoubtedly disappeared from many parts of their range.

Unfortunately no references are given in the text, and the bibliography is brief, so it is difficult to check most of the data. For instance, where did the author learn