

Overlying the scientific rigour of the book is a sense of humanity and humour which enhance the reputations of author and badger in about equal measure. Chapter 1 tells us how to study badgers and Chapter 12 how to live with them, and the well illustrated intervening chapters enlighten us in both these laudable pursuits.

F.B. O'CONNOR

The Dragonflies of Great Britain and Ireland, by Cyril O. Hammond, Curwen, £9.75.

The book includes beautiful colour plates, explanatory text, and keys to genera (although not, as claimed, to species) of the adults of all the British dragonflies and damselflies. It also includes up-to-date distribution maps and a key to larvae. All other comparable books are now out of print.

As a guide to identification it certainly fulfils its purpose admirably, but overall this is a fairly expensive book with an outdated outlook. Unlike the present conservation-oriented butterfly books, this seems to be written for collectors. Since many of the species can be identified in the field with binoculars and patience, it is a pity the methods of collection and preservation and the description of aberrant forms are afforded so much detail. It is likely that these vulnerable insects are good 'indicators': a good variety of species in an area would probably mean a healthy aquatic environment. It is noted that some species have decreased in recent years, but one is left virtually unaware of the threats posed to the larvae by drainage and pollution. Some species may be under-recorded, but of the 44 species only sixteen are recorded in more than 10 per cent of the 10-km squares with recent records. Of these only three are very widespread, occurring in more than one third of the total squares. Seventeen species have records in less than two per cent of the squares—three are probably extinct, three are irregular immigrants, and eleven are extremely restricted by habitat or climate.

It is a matter of regret that the New Naturalist 'Dragonflies' has not been updated and reprinted because that instilled the desire to study and conserve these delightful creatures in a way that the present volume could never do.

TIM INSKIPP

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