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This volume is recommended as a portrayal of the public face of Captain S. A. White. It is copiously illustrated with many of his own photographs. However it lacks a list of White's scientific publications, and apart from the bird specimens there no attempt to tell us where White's collections are housed nor any listing of those species which received names through his collecting. Furthermore, given the small scientific community of the time and White's membership of it, it would have been interesting to know how he was viewed by his fellow scientists. In conservation matters was he really a lone voice crying in the wilderness as portrayed by Linn or was there a solid nucleus of support from the comparatively recently formed scientific societies?

R. BARKER

J. H. BECKING. *Henri Jacob Victor Sody (1892-1959). His life and work, a biographical and bibliographical study*. E. J. Brill, Leiden: 1989. Pp viii, 272; illustrated. Price: Hfl 100. ISBN 90-04-08687-0.

Sody's name is familiar through his contributions to the taxonomy of Indonesian mammals (and birds) including his valuable book on the Javan rhinoceros. Educated at the Agricultural University in Wageningen (Holland), Sody spent about thirty years (1918-1947) on Java teaching at the secondary agricultural school in Bogor. Becking wrote this book as a tribute to Sody and as a guide to his work. He obviously had access to Sody's manuscripts and papers, although these are not detailed here. The historian of biology will enjoy reading the first short biographical chapters including some factual data and some recollections of the situations in which Sody worked. This is followed by several lists with details about the 136 new names proposed by Sody; the three taxa commemorating Sody; the localities where he or his helpers collected zoological specimens; his animal sketches; his donations of living animals to zoos and specimens to museums; and his bibliography which shows that Sody wrote 89 scientific papers on mammals, 32 on birds and 24 on miscellaneous subjects, as well as 47 popular articles. The final part of the book gives two of Sody's yet unpublished papers, one a checklist of Javanese mammals, the other a study of the diets of Javanese birds. Both these manuscripts were "compiled" by Becking from Sody's notes and he changed the nomenclature to conform to modern usage. This will be of interest to biologists, but less to historians, because it is hard to discover what was written by Sody and what was added by Becking.

The book is well produced and well researched. Its price is rather high as the contents could easily have been condensed without loss of data. It will be useful to taxonomists studying Indonesian mammals and birds.

L. C. ROOKMAAKER

C. LYTE. *Frank Kingdon-Ward. The last of the great plant hunters*. John Murray, London: 1989. Pp xvi, 218; illustrated. Price £16.95. ISBN 0-7195-4735-0.

Frank Kingdon-Ward was a prolific author, penning some of the best accounts of exploration in the eastern Himalayas and Tibet during the first half of this century. The freshness of his observations is not just enchanting but also highly illuminating about the natural history and geography of a region of immense botanical riches. Thankfully Ward's books are readily available, some in facsimile, and may still be enjoyed; Lyte lists these but *none* of Ward's many articles in periodicals. Provided with such a wealth of autobiographical text, what we sorely needed was a good analytical biography of this insatiable plant-hunter, with an expansive bibliography and comprehensive calendar of his journeys with localities. While Lyte's précis of Kingdon-Ward's peripatetic life may bring Ward to the attention of general readers, a marvellous opportunity has been wasted, and the prodigious work left for some future biographer is doubled by the incomprehensible omission of references.

I do not understand authors who spend years on diligent research and when they publish their books cite only a fraction of the sources they consulted, and then almost always *only* printed materials. Lyte acknowledged that he had access to manuscripts, and I know he consulted archives in various Irish gardens, yet there are no footnotes, no attempt properly to give the sources of innumerable quotations, no calendar of letters, diaries or garden records. By this apparently cavalier rejection of scholarly practice, Lyte denies to others the benefits of his considerable labours.

Perhaps Lyte is not to blame for this emasculated book. I had high hopes that he would illuminate a 'legendary' figure in twentieth century exploration and botany. Alas he has presented us with an anodyne biography which adds little to Kingdon-Ward's own publications.

E. C. NELSON

E. STONE. *Ted Ellis. The people's naturalist*. Jarrold Colour Publications, Norwich: 1988. Pp 159; illustrated. Price: £3.95. ISBN 0-7117-0436-8.

This short biography will delight those who knew Ted Ellis, and for most something new will probably emerge from this sympathetic account of his life as a naturalist, journalist and broadcaster. For myself, it was Ted's talent as a poet. For those who did not know him, the book will hold most significance for those familiar with Norfolk, in particular its fens and waterways, but there is so much also for anyone who appreciates the ways of the naturalist, and one cannot but help draw comparisons with Thomas

being widely read by the majority of active taxonomists nor indeed by those interested in the history of science.

The scope of the book is narrow. It draws almost exclusively on the experience of zoological taxonomy; does not question whether many taxonomists use phenetics or cladistics; nor question whether the use of these techniques has led to significant advances in taxonomy or rather funnelled money and effort away from other more urgent problems. The author makes the questionable assumption that people who use a different methodology (in this case pheneticists or cladists) are at the forefront of the subject (in this case taxonomy).

The text, based around the author's doctoral thesis, is of variable clarity and quality. In some cases the language is highly convoluted, annoys the reader and obscures what the author is saying; "Given that pattern recognition is procedurally prior . . ." certainly annoyed me. In other cases the language is straightforward and the arguments follow lucidly one from another. Generally the later chapters are the better.

J. PARNELL

A. DELEGORGUE. *Travels in southern Africa, volume 1*. (Translated by F. Webb, with introduction and index by S. J. Alexander and C. de B. Webb. (Killie Campbell Library Africana Publications no 5.) Killie Campbell Africana Library & University of Natal Press, Durban & Pietermaritzburg: 1990. Pp xxxii, (xii), 359. Price: R49.95. ISBN 0-86980-727-7.

Although these *Travels* are called "famous" on the back cover of the book, Delegorgue is hardly a well-known name to any zoologist or botanist. Adulphe Delegorgue (1815-1850) went to South Africa in 1838, probably mostly in search of adventure and maybe hoping to find a way to earn his living by shooting and selling trophies of animals. He spent six years in the south-eastern part of the continent.

On his return home, he published the journal of his expeditions in his two-volume *Voyage dans l'Afrique Australe* (1847). It is full of what can be called natural history observations, made while hunting the animals, but his lack of formal training make many of his remarks rather difficult to appreciate. *Voyage* was never translated. The present book is a new translation by Fleur Webb and on the whole this is a good achievement. What makes this edition valuable and remarkable is the "natural history index" by Stephanie J. Alexander. Most comparable editions of older travel accounts have good indexes to names mentioned in the text or to places visited, but the animals are rarely accorded much space in the comments. This index lists all the animals mentioned by Delegorgue and although some of the notes seem superfluous, this must be counted an important part of the book. Only one correction may be mentioned. In his use of the name 'Ourigourap', Delegorgue followed François Levaillant's *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux d'Afrique* (1796-1813), not to refer to a crow, but to the Egyptian vulture, *Neophron percnopterus*. There is also a second index to persons and places, but unfortunately Delegorgue's expeditions are not further annotated and his routes are not recorded on a modern map, which will make it difficult to determine exactly where and when the observations in the book were made. This is a useful contribution to nineteenth century travel literature and all contributors are congratulated on their efforts.

L. C. ROOKMAAKER

A. FORBES. *Unbeaten tracks in islands of the Far East*. Oxford University Press, Singapore: 1987. Pp 305. Price: £4.95. ISBN 0-19-588857-X.

This is a book to include in your hand-luggage to relieve the tedium of modern travel. You could, of course, simply read it from the safety of your armchair, but you will best savour Anna Forbes's gentle and expressive observations on life in the East Indies, while in transit yourself.

First published as *Insulinde*, in 1887, the book brings to life the peoples of the Indonesian islands she and her naturalist husband visited, their surroundings, food and customs. There is anguish, hardship and danger here. On seeing a cargo of thousands of exotic bird skins in Surabaya, she writes in distress: "Soon we shall have lost off the face of the globe these unique and most gorgeous of the feathered tribes". She relates the drenching stages of the fever which overcame them both and calmly recalls seeing the severed limbs of rival villagers.

There is also laughter and enchantment, and a wonderful pleasure in the beauty about her. For me, the main enjoyment of the book lies in the eloquence and simplicity of her descriptions: "did ever waves display a purer emerald in their graceful curl, or crown themselves with crests so white?"

J. CASSELLS

R. M. PECK. *Land of the eagle. A natural history of north America*. BBC Books, London: 1990. Pp 288; illustrated. Price: £17.95. ISBN 0-563-20858-9.

This is a well-written, beautifully illustrated book that treats the natural wonders of North America and segments of its history and natural history. Each of the eight chapters treats a portion of the continent and each was used in an eight-part BBC television series.

The earliest chapters treat eastern portions of the continent—the Atlantic coast followed by eastern Canada with its North Woods, and lastly Florida with its Everglades as well as other parts of the South-