Land and Water Bugs of the British Isles

By Dr. T. R. E. Southwood and Dennis Leston. Pp. xi+436+63 plates. (London and New York: Frederick Warne and Co., Ltd., 1959.) 30*s*. net.

THIS book, the first published since 1892 to key all the British species of Hemiptera-Heteroptera, should be valuable both to the person who wishes to recognize and learn something about the occasional bug that crosses his path and to the student of the group. The former will find the generally accurate coloured plates and black-and-white drawings will help him to recognize many of the species, while most of the keys are practical and not difficult to use. Perhaps one exception is the key to the subfamilies of the Miridae (here the authors have my sympathy), which might be accompanied by a warning that the arolia and pseudo-arolia are not readily visible on carded specimens; also the term 'collar' is not accurately defined. Some of the keys, too, might have more references, including pagination, to the text figures. The keys and illustrations are usually sufficient for easy recognition: the book gives no further description of the adult insect.

Technical terms are generally used but are very well defined in the glossary. Another useful feature is a list of plants in alphabetical order with references to the bugs usually associated with each. There are also practical notes on collection, preservation and study.

The specialist will find this book a valuable and up-to-date compilation of details of the biology and distribution of the species, amply substantiated by numerous references. The diploid chromosome complement is given, when known. Confusion may sometimes be caused by the complete absence of synonyms in this book, a few of the new names being unfamiliar to many collectors.

W. J. Le Quesne

British Parasitic Fungi

A Host-Parasite Index and a Guide to British Literature on the Fungus Diseases of Cultivated Plants. By W. C. Moore. Pp. xvi+430. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1959.) 45*s*. net.

WHEREVER crops are grown the study and control of fungus diseases is of major importance. This is reflected in the vast and scattered literature relating to diseases of economic plants. Every time the plant pathologist finds a disease which is new to him he is faced with a time-consuming search through this literature, much of which may not be readily accessible. This task will be greatly lightened for the British plant pathologist by the publication of Mr. Moore's book. The book is in two sections: the first giving lists of recorded parasitic fungi, together with some actinomycetes, for every plant of any economic importance grown in Britain. The second section lists the parasites alphabetically and for each gives the correct name and original reference, well known synonyms and the common name(s) of the disease(s) caused. For the more important diseases useful data relating to incidence and history and a list of the more important papers dealing with the various aspects of the disease are also given.

Mr. Moore brings to the compilation of this book an unrivalled knowledge and practical experience of diseases of economic plants in Britain, and the book will be an indispensable and authoritative work of reference for all mycologists and plant pathologists. It is well arranged and clearly printed, so that any desired item can be turned up at once. It will assuredly save many hours in the identification of plant diseases and the tracking down of the relevant literature.

Lilian E. Hawker

Rivers and Man

By Dr. Robert Brittain. Pp. 288+13 plates. (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1959.) 21*s*. net.

THE changing relationship between rivers and men through time is a fascinating topic and well worthy of the attention of the wide audience aimed at by this book. The writing is, to say the least, enthusiastic. The canvas used is a broad one and the picture has been executed in glaring colours. The technically qualified will cringe many times as over-generalization follows over-generalization. The book as a whole raises the perpetual problem as to how science may be popularized without sacrificing the truth. The first chapter on the making of the world consists of a large number of undigested snippets of geological fact and fiction. In dealing with archæological matters in the remaining ten chapters the author is more, in fact, much too plausible and uncritical. The impression gained is that archæology has no problems, that no one was ever in any doubt as to the meaning of evidence. Is this the kind of image of itself that science wishes to project? I think not.

E. H. Brown

Détecteurs de Particules (Compteurs et Scintillateurs)

Mécanisme et Réalisation. Par Daniel Blanc. Pp. v+324. (Paris: Masson et Cie, 1959.) 3,900 francs.

THE progress of experimental nuclear physics has been very dependent on the development of new experimental apparatus at the appropriate time. In the case of detectors for nuclear particles, the new device is frequently in common use in the research laboratory long before the detailed mechanism of the detector is fully understood. The book under review was intended to collect together for the French-speaking physicist our present knowledge of detectors. Its completeness, therefore, makes it rather useful. Although more complete treatises on particular detector types exist in English, no recent one includes all types as this book does. Moreover, a useful balance is struck by M. Blanc between the theories of detection mechanisms and the recipes for making workable devices.

Rather more than half the book is devoted to ion-chambers, including a fairly complete discussion of the Geiger–Müller counter. Most of the remainder is devoted to scintillation counters of all kinds, including a useful discussion of photo-multiplier types. Chapters on spark counters and crystal counters are also included. Unfortunately, the latter does not include semiconductor-junction counters. Over the past year these have proved to be an exciting new development of the greatest importance. Aside from this omission references are given very fully up to June 1958. The greater part of this volume should not go out of date too fast and will prove to be an invaluable handbook especially for the graduate student in nuclear physics.

E. B. Paul