

is abundant in the reserve. The vegetation indicates an exceptionally high humidity, and bluebells grow in the open. A varied moss flora grows on the stones. The grassland of the reserve will continue to be grazed by sheep (rabbits having been virtually eliminated by myxomatosis), and the gallops will continue to be used for training racehorses. More than sixty breeding species of birds have recently been listed at Fyfield Down, including the wheatear, grasshopper warbler and six species of tits; the hen harrier, buzzard, peregrine, quail, hoopoe, and short-eared and long-eared owls have also been observed. The present Declaration by the Nature Conservancy covers an area of approximately 610 acres, about three miles west of Marlborough, which has been leased to the Conservancy by Mr. G. E. Todd, of Manton House. Permits will be necessary for those who wish to collect specimens of animals or plants, or to visit parts of the reserve away from the footpaths. Applications for such purposes should be addressed to the Regional Officer for the South, Nature Conservancy, Furzebrook Research Station, Wareham, Dorset.

Westleton Heath straddles the road between Westleton and Dunwich. Part of this heath is already included in the Minsmere bird reserve managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of birds, and the Conservancy's acquisition of 117 acres on the eastern side safeguards the remainder up to the boundary of the Forestry Commission's Dunwich Forest, which lies between it and the sea. The heath is well known for its birds, including the stonechat, woodlark, red-backed shrike, stone-curlew, lesser redpoll and nightjar. It also has great importance as one of the few good surviving examples of the characteristic and formerly extensive East Suffolk heathlands, most of which have recently been reclaimed for agriculture or afforestation, or have been absorbed by the needs of defence. The dry sandy and shingly soil is of low fertility and is underlaid by the Westleton Beds, sands and gravel of mid-Glacial (Pleistocene) age laid down under marine conditions. It is clothed largely in heather and is crossed or bounded by roads and footpaths to which the public are asked to keep in order to reduce the fire risk and to avoid disturbing the wild life. Inquiries and applications for permits should be addressed to the Regional Officer for East Anglia, Nature Conservancy, 6 Upper King Street, Norwich, Norfolk.

Yarner Wood, near Bovey Tracey, was bought by the Nature Conservancy and declared a reserve in May 1952. A part of the wood was burnt by incendiary bombs during the air raid on Exeter in 1942, and in this section the fire killed about two-thirds of the standing trees and left others badly damaged. It was followed by a dense growth of heather, bilberry and bracken, and a plan was adopted early last year whereby part of the wood was set aside for scientific investigations into different methods of regenerating woodland, for encouraging colonization by insectivorous birds and for population studies of small mammals by the University of Exeter. Otherwise the reserve is being managed to re-establish woodland of the type which is believed originally to have been there. In order to protect and diversify the reserve, an additional twenty-eight acres adjoining the reserve and the B.3344 road from Bovey Tracey to Manaton have been bought by the Conservancy. Included in this addition are an interesting small alder wood and bog containing such

plants as the royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*). The acquisition includes Yarrow Lodge, which is being converted to accommodate members of the Conservancy's staff working in the reserve, access to which is by permit only and must be strictly limited in order to avoid interference with the programme of scientific research. Inquiries should be addressed to the Regional Officer for the South-West, Nature Conservancy, Furzebrook Research Station, Wareham, Dorset.

BOOKS IN SHORT SUPPLY

TO the specialist bookseller, the supply and prices of books which are no longer in print is a pressing problem to which there is no easy answer. In an address to the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History, C. Kirke Swann explained how the bookseller has to know the comparative scarcity of books as well as their importance to the student or collector (*J. Soc. Bibliography of Nat. Hist.*, 3, Pt. 3; January 1956). It is surprising to learn that, of those books which have been published during the past fifty years and are seemingly necessary to the student of natural history, about two-thirds of them are out of print. Demand greatly exceeds supply for such well-known books as Goodrich, "Structure and Development of the Vertebrates"; Fraenkel and Gunn, "Orientation of Animals"; Flower and Lydekker, "Introduction to the Study of Mammals"; Noble, "Biology of Amphibia"; Eltringham, "Historical Methods"; Ellis, "British Snails"; Scott, "Studies in Fossil Botany"; Seward, "Fossil Plants"; Hutchinson, "Families of Flowering Plants"; West and Fritsch, "British Freshwater Algae", and many others.

There are several reasons for this scarcity. Some editions were comparatively small and there have been no reprints; copies have been worn out through use, to say nothing of destruction and damage during two great wars; an increased interest in the subject; and comparative lack of new books to replace many of the older standard works.

The situation could be met by reprinting, but here there are several difficulties. Printing to-day is not cheap, especially if there are illustrations to be considered. Another important factor is the number of copies required. Two hundred copies or so of a number of the books would probably satisfy the demand. Reprinting in such comparatively small numbers is not economic unless the price is correspondingly high. It would often result in the prices of reprints being far higher than the present market price of the originals. Some books are rapidly becoming irreplaceable.

In discussing some of the older books the position is rather different. Editions, compared with modern books, were often very small, and in some cases extremely so, ranging from about four or five hundred copies down to less than a dozen. Another factor is the high prices at which many of the books were published, particularly if the present value of the pound, compared with, say, the year 1830, is borne in mind. Many of these older books have almost disappeared from the market and are only to be found in libraries, from which they are seldom, if ever, likely to emerge. Though quite a large number of these are now only of historical interest, they are eagerly sought after by the collector.