

Beadle, Tatum and other investigators who have made important contributions to the unravelling of the properties of life. Developments over the past ten years are explained with rare skill even if the author's imaginative gifts sometimes exceed her concern for objectivity. With its many fine illustrations *The Coil of Life* could be read profitably by many who wish to know more about the science of life. To help them to a sound start with better perspective, the publishers might remove the dust-covers and their extravagant blurb about great discoveries "which have at last virtually solved the riddle of life".

T. H. HAWKINS

The Boy's Country Book

Edited by John Moore. Pp. 320. (London: William Collins, Sons and Co., Ltd., 1961.) 12s. 6d. net.

ONE of the drawbacks of growing up is a gradual abatement of curiosity. The reaction of many people to the pressures of life is a form of withdrawal, a cutting down of interests, sometimes deliberate, sometimes not, leaving eventually a limited number, often entirely spectator interests or indoor ones. City children of parents who reach this stage may never have their eyes opened to the possibilities of out-door country interests unless schoolmasters or others take a hand. This book should help. It should be in public and school libraries.

Mr. Moore has enlisted the help of some twenty authors of national standing. Each has contributed an outline of his (or her) own particular sport, pastime or recreation which could kindle an interest, and has recommended one or more specialist books where its details can be followed up.

Part 1 has five chapters: route planning, lightweight camping, travel by horse, on not getting lost and on outdoor food. In Part 2, nine chapters range from rock-climbing to gliding, through sailing, angling and other interests. Parts 3 and 4 have nineteen chapters which cover a range from geology and archaeology to a wide variety of natural history topics.

No money has been spent on expensive half-tone illustrations. Each chapter is headed by a simple drawing, and in a few instances simple illustrations clarify the text, but in general the book gives value for money in useful print rather than eye-catching pictures.

H. DUNNICLIFF

Instructions to Young Naturalists

Part 4: Fossils. By Dr. W. E. Swinton. (The Brompton Library.) Pp. 112 + 13 plates. (London: Museum Press, Ltd., 1961.) 12s. 6d. net.

THIS is more than a set of instructions to young fossil hunters, it is the story both of conditions on the Earth's surface and of the animals that have roamed that surface during the past five hundred million years.

Magnificently illustrated with line drawings and photographs, it is a most readable and absorbing account. Dr. Swinton takes care to explain the theoretical problems involved in simple, lucid language; and long, resounding names, which so many young palaeontologists will enjoy rolling their tongues around, are provided with their meanings or origins—a truly educational touch.

The practical nature of such a hobby is, nevertheless, always to the fore and constant reference is made in the text to sites at which the fossils described may be sought. The chapter of detailed collecting

instructions gives further geographical information, along with a map of fossiliferous localities. This is followed by a useful list of reference books and museums from which further information may be gleaned.

Young fossil-hunting enthusiasts are a demanding race, but all should find stimulation as well as instruction in the pages of this book.

It is not, however, a book for the half-hearted. Dr. Swinton seems to sense their easily induced boredom and his style is too apologetic to rouse them from a prejudiced inertia.

The only serious criticism that can be levelled is the virtual rejection of the plant world. Apart from two photographs and a few passing references to the food of animals, these sustainers of life, on the energy transformations of which the whole of evolution has depended, are completely ignored.

Young naturalists who live in coal-mining areas will find this particularly frustrating, while academic botanists may justifiably feel that the title should have had the word 'Animal' inserted.

J. S. FORDHAM

The Young Scientist's Companion

A Book of Information and Advice to all concerned with Science. By Maurice Goldsmith. Pp. 160 + 4 plates. (London: Souvenir Press, Ltd., 1961.) 15s. net.

THE book claims to be "an information guide for all concerned with science" and its weakness is that it attempts too much. For example, the schoolboy is unlikely to wish to present scientific films or to use wall charts, so that lists of addresses relating to them are not helpful to him, while the science teacher or technologist can get fuller information from professional sources. The information given on careers is necessarily limited, but it could have been extended had the reader been referred to *Whitaker's Almanac* for the addresses of professional bodies, which occupy four pages. There are some useful notes on equipping a 'home laboratory' but few suggestions about what to do with the equipment. The notes on science fiction could well be omitted since the schoolboy is well informed and the adult who is an addict will know his way round the public library.

The best features are perhaps the illustration of scientific method as it was applied in developing the periodic table of elements and the commentary, which contains some interesting extracts from the writings of great scientists and of present-day scientific workers as well as elaborations of points mentioned in the text. The book list is also valuable.

The book is one of a series of *Companions* so that the author was presumably expected to fit a little of everything into 150 pages or so. He is not to be blamed if the resulting volume appears superficial.

K. W. LYON

Vanishing Animals

Preserving Nature's Rarities. By Philip Street. Pp. 232 + 20 plates. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1961.) 21s. net.

THIS book concerns one of the greatest problems facing naturalists and zoologists throughout the world: the conservation of wild life. Particular emphasis is given to rare species and to those threatened with extinction.