Primate Atlas

Taxonomic Atlas of Living Primates. By A. B. Chiarelli. Pp. vii+363. (Academic: New York and London, August 1972.) £6; \$18.50.

THE principal features of this atlas are an identification key and a series of species profiles providing information on distribution, body weight and size, coat coloration, synonyms and vernacular names. Most profiles have accompanying photographs and combined distribution maps are included. Attractive though this schema might appear to be, its realization sadly leaves much to be desired.

The basic classification itself would find few adherents today. Recognizing only suborders, families, genera and species, the author has his first suborder Prosimii embrace Tupaiidae and Tarsiidae as families of equal rank to five loriform and lemuriform families. At lower levels the general absence of subgenera and species groups, combined with some tendency to "lump", has meant the virtual disappearance of certain significant distinctions (for example, *Miopithecus*) and indications of special affinity (for example, among *Presbytis* species).

The identification key, while useful, is not without errors and its effectiveness is curtailed where, in spite of the claim to be based upon readily recognizable external features only, it relies on a knowledge of dental characteristics, the pelage colour of the neonate or the animal's provenance.

In the profiles of the individual species carelessness is everywhere apparent: mistakes and inconsistencies abound, and the brevity of treatment is such as to make many statements positively misleading. Weights and linear measurements are given without reference to sample size so that a range may in fact derive from only two animals, and a single figure may be either an average or a measurement from a single individual. Neither here nor elsewhere is there any indication of the extent to which subspecific variation occurs and affects the issue.

The descriptions of coat colour repeatedly fail to characterize adequately the species and the sections dealing with geographical distribution are no more satisfactory. Why are some ranges specified precisely but others given only in general terms? More disturbing is the frequency of errors in distribution data in both text and maps; examples are species of the genera *Tupaia*, *Papio*, *Presbytis*, *Colobus* and *Hylobates*, but many more could be cited.

Finally, too many photographs are of unnecessarily poor quality and line drawings have been used in some instances when very good photographs

exist. And the last thing one expects in a taxonomic atlas is the incorrect identification of photographs, yet this fault appears at least twice: the picture presented as *Tupaia ellioti* is not of that form (*Anathana*) but probably shows a southern *T. glis*; the so-called *Microcebus murinus* is really an infant *Galago senegalensis*.

One must conclude that although this work does serve a useful function even as it stands, it would have been so much better had more care been taken in its compilation.

G. H. MANLEY

Reproduction

Reproductive Patterns. Edited by C. R. Austin and R. V. Short. (*Reproduction in Mammals, Book 4.*) Pp. vii+156. (Cambridge University Press: London, 1972.) £3.40; \$11.95.

Artificial Control of Reproduction. Edited by C. R. Austin and R. V. Short. (*Reproduction in Mammals, Book 5.*) Pp. 152. (Cambridge University Press: London, 1972.) £3.40; \$11.95.

SCIENCE is usually written about either in a formal style by academics or in a more racy and provocative style by journalists. These two volumes, concluding the series *Reproduction in Mammals*, follow their predecessors in combining many of the attributes of both. Written by acknowledged experts in a lively and immensely readable fashion they cannot possibly fail to fan the interest of anyone with the least spark of curiosity about reproductive biology. The various authors have extracted their information from reliable and comprehensive sources, including their own contributions, and presented it in an uncluttered form with clarity and coherence. The numerous tables, graphs and line drawings have generally been used to good effect. In the many instances where different topics overlap there is a reference to other chapters in the series, and a sensible short reading list is given at the end of each chapter. The editors' brief was clearly to consider the human angle wherever possible, and this has been done by reference to known facts, and also by extrapolation and prognostication.

The authors have stood back from the trees and shown us what the wood really looks like. This is an ideal approach for newcomers to the subject, as well as for their teachers, and also serves as a useful compass for those who may have got lost in the depths. In the absence of any serious competition at this level of analysis these volumes are to be welcomed as a valuable addition to the teaching texts. And even student grants would run to the paperback issues. In some ways the

whole series might have been better published as a single volume, but this is a purely personal view.

The volume on reproductive patterns is not so restricted as the title might suggest, and as well as articles on species variation, environmental control and behaviour, there is consideration of immunological factors and of ageing. The whole is illustrative of the diversity of control processes in reproduction both within the individual and the society.

In the final volume stress is laid upon the pressing dual requirements for increasing farm animal production whilst severely limiting human reproductive potential. Hopes for the former are high, but there appears to be much less optimism for a significant assault on the latter. In all likelihood we shall have to rely on the perfection and application of presently available methods of contraception rather than hope for the development of any totally new ones, at least for a solution to the problem in the foreseeable future. The female of our species will be particularly dismayed to learn that there is no immediate prospect for a chemical method of male contraception.

It is often forgotten that for the individual problems of infertility and developmental abnormality are considered more urgent and distressing. The achievements and aspirations in these areas are also dealt with in this volume.

The series editors themselves conclude with frank discussions of the social, ethical and legal implications of manipulating human reproduction. Their stand is uncompromising. The present situation demands that we alter those attitudes that have been forged by cultural and religious dogma and assume full responsibility for the exploitation of new scientific techniques.

W. D. BILLINGTON

Finches of Europe

Finches. By I. Newton. Pp. 288+28 plates. (William Collins: London, February 1973.) £3.

THIS is an excellent account of the European representatives of an interesting group of small, stout-billed, seed-eating and often brightly coloured birds—the true finches (Fringillidae). There are two subfamilies, one comprising only the chaffinch, the brambling and a single extralimital form; the other, the cardueline finches, has well over a hundred species, of which sixteen are European. Much of the book is based on Dr Newton's own researches, but he has also made full use of the extensive literature.

Three chapters are devoted to a summary review of the eighteen species. Most of the others deal more generally