

Book reviews

given species. Second, the incompleteness of much of the data means that a fairly thorough working knowledge of the distribution of the species is essential in order to interpret many of the species' listings. Third, the categorising of the species as Endangered, Vulnerable, Rare and Indeterminate or Insufficiently Known, has always been problematical, but the present work shows how acute the problem is. For example, the natterjack toad, which is protected under British legislation as an Endangered species is listed as Indeterminate. This is presumably because, despite being endangered or even extinct over most of its northern limits, in Spain and other parts of its range it is often very abundant. However, the yellow-bellied toad, which in parts of Romania and Yugoslavia I have seen so abundant as to be breeding in cart ruts, is listed as Vulnerable, as is the green toad, which is more or less an eastern counterpart to the natterjack and like that species is abundant in the south, but declining in the north. It would have been more useful to have treated the status of each species country by country as has been done in the section on legislation.

Honegger's work highlights how little is known about the majority of Europe's amphibians and reptiles—in fact, it is a field in which the enthusiast can still make many exciting discoveries. As recently as the late 1970s a new species of toad, *Balaophryne muletensis* was discovered on Mallorca—listed by Honegger as Endangered.

Despite the shortcomings listed above, which are probably inevitable when a book is produced from a working report, Honegger's book deserves a place in any good library.

John A. Burton

Reference

Honegger, R.E. 1978. *Threatened Amphibians and Reptiles in Europe*. Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Gone Birding

Bill Oddie

Methuen, approx. price: £6.95
(hardback)

This excellently written little book is an autobiographical account of Bill Oddie's early exploits as a birdwatcher; contained in some 180 pages with numerous photographs and sketches by the author. It describes, in eight chapters, how Bill evolved from a young egg-collector into one of the most respected birders and active conservationists in Britain. For the last three years he has been helping raise funds for the ffPS, particularly as a team member in the sponsored birdwatch. I found the content particularly amusing, especially as we both seem to have experienced the same brushes with unsympathetic farmers, water bailiffs and their like—their 'Ois!' still ring in my ears too. It is not without its serious side however, for it illustrates how Bill acquired his expertise and how he managed to add considerably to the knowledge of Midland birds. He also highlights the fact that by constant coverage even the most unpromising places will eventually turn up good birds. It is particularly pleasing to see that he emphasises that quick, uncritical observations can lead to misidentifications, and illustrates this point by mentioning some of his *faux pas*—what an honest birder! For the reasons above, I cannot but thoroughly recommend this book to anybody who is a beginner, young or old, and suggest they try and follow Bill's techniques, excluding of course the egg collecting period. I'm sure the more experienced birder will also enjoy *Gone Birding*, as a little light relief from pouring over field guides, or when the weather is too bad to venture out.

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