

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Ecotravellers' Wildlife Guide to Costa Rica.—Les Beletsky. 1998. Academic Press, San Diego, CA. xii + 426 pp., 80 color plates, plus photographs and black-and-white figures. ISBN 0-12-084810-4. \$27.95 (paper).

This book is exactly what you want to be reading on a plane headed for Costa Rica for the first time. It starts with natural history, geography, and conservation issues of Costa Rica and then covers the major terrestrial vertebrates. There are sections discussing amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals at mainly the family level, followed by color plates and descriptions and ranges of most of the common terrestrial vertebrates. It is certainly aimed at the nonprofessional, nonetheless it is fun to read about terrestrial vertebrates other than birds in the tropics and see their pictures. Beletsky is touted on the cover as an avid ecotraveller and writer of wildlife guides who had a past life as an avian field researcher, somewhat of an understatement (in my opinion) and an interesting marketing juxtaposition.

Animal Vocal Communication: A New Approach.—Donald H. Owings and Eugene S. Morton. 1998. Cambridge University Press, New York. xii + 284 pp., numerous black-and-white figures. ISBN 0-521-32468-8. \$64.95 (cloth).

So, what's the new approach? Owings, a psychologist, and Morton, an ornithologist, think things should be viewed differently. After an introductory chapter that reviews classic animal communication theory, we find in the second chapter that the important "new" concepts are assessment and management. Animals assess signals that they receive to adjust their behaviors to fit the current set of circumstances and they also manage their signals that they send to bring current circumstances into line with the manager's (their) interests. The third chapter deals with form and function in vocal communication and the fourth deals with mechanisms of vocal communication. The last chapter explains why the authors believe that the assessment/management model is a reasonable replacement for the information concept model. This relatively slim volume would seem to be reasonable for a graduate seminar in animal behavior, if it weren't for the cost of the book.

The Life of Birds.—David Attenborough. 1998. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 320 pp., 180 color photographs. ISBN 0-691-01633-X. \$29.95 (cloth).

As I write, this book is currently the number one best selling nonfiction book in Great Britain. This follows the showing of the 10-part series, *Life of Birds*, on BBC television. In fall of 1999, that series will be shown in the United States on PBS. This book parallels the television series, so the coverage of the life of birds

is somewhat skewed towards certain themes. Nonetheless, the text is lively and scattered with bird trivia, some of which is suspect, but no references are provided so there is no way to track the source of the information. The pictures are great and there is a tendency to discuss the bizarre rather than the mainstream. I have no doubt that this book will also be popular in the United States. I would suggest giving this book to anyone you know that might be thinking of becoming involved with birds, particularly some young impressionable teenager.

Shrikes of the World—II: Conservation Implementation.—Edited by Reuven Yosef and Fred E. Lohrer. 1998. International Birdwatching Center in Eilat, P.O. Box 774, Eilat 88106, Israel. viii + 119 pp., numerous black-and-white figures and tables. \$15.00 (paper).

This is the proceedings of the Second International Shrike Symposium held in Israel in 1996. The first (reviewed by C. Kellner, *Condor* 98:891–893) was held in 1993 in Florida and attracted many participants. The second attracted a smaller group (38), but the focus of shrike researchers is changing as well to more applied research as reflected in the papers in this volume. The majority of papers deal with only three species, Red-backed (*Lanius collurio*), Great Gray (*L. excubitor*), and Loggerhead (*L. ludovicianus*) Shrikes, and the largest section is on conservation and management (nearly 50 pages). This small volume will be of interest to anyone involved with shrike research and conservation.

Cognitive Ecology.—Edited by Reuven Dukas. 1998. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. ix + 420 pp., numerous figure and tables. ISBN 0-226-16932-4 (cloth). ISBN 0-226-16933-2 (paper). \$95.00 (cloth), \$30.00 (paper).

Cognitive ecology is "the effects of information processing and decision making on animal fitness" or, as the book is subtitled, "the evolutionary ecology of information processing and decision making." This volume of 11 contributions (4 of which were written by Dukas) grew out of a symposium sponsored by the Animal Behavior Society. This would appear to be an emerging field of research, incorporating psychology (e.g., learning theory), neurobiology, and ecology, and each chapter has a relatively long literature cited section drawn from many disciplines. Not surprising, birds are prominently discussed in nearly every chapter. As Dukas points out, in some areas, basic mechanisms are not well understood and even main hypothesis are vaguely articulated. Nonetheless, this would be an excellent choice for a graduate seminar in animal behavior or avian ecology.—KIMBERLY G. SMITH, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701, e-mail: kgsmith@comp.uark.edu