

Conservationists are often concerned about the need to preserve biological diversity. Here we have a group of diverse organisms and a book that goes a long way towards explaining the ecological and evolutionary meaning of their diversity. I believe that such knowledge is essential if we are to be successful in paying more than lip-service to the notion that diversity should be conserved—after all, if a phenomenon is at least partly understood, there will be an increased chance that conservation policies can be chosen and implemented that will be effective in their impact.

There is today a tendency among biologists to play down the importance of taxonomic knowledge. Such knowledge is held to be outside the scope of 'modern' biology—even of 'modern' ecology. I think that the pendulum has swung too far in such a direction and that there is now an increasing need to encourage and train people to know something about the classification of groups of organisms. Dr Sargent, in his book on *Catocala*, successfully combines taxonomy with ecology and the study of behaviour, and introduces us to the kind of experiments that necessarily lead to an understanding of biological diversity. *Legion of Night* is an excellent book—one that I would like to have written myself.

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**Health Hazards from New Environmental Pollutants.** Report of a WHO Study Group. Technical Report Series No. 586, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland: 96 pp., 20 × 14 × 0.6 cm, figs and tables, stiff paper covers, S.Fr. 8 or US \$3.20, 1976.

The preventive health approach and the up-to-date scientific information given in this concise booklet will recommend it as an indispensable work of reference on the subject indicated in its title. It presents the report of the WHO Study Group that convened in late September and early October 1974, and whose main objective was to assess the usefulness and limitations of the methods of forecasting the health hazards arising from developments in chemical industries, with a view to preventing adverse happenings of acute and chronic diseases among the industrial workers as well as in the general public.

Technology forecasting in environmental health is dealt with in one chapter of the book. It refers to the experience gained in forecasting possible hazards through knowledge of the chemical structure and physicochemical properties of a substance, both of which govern its biological activities and behaviour in the environment. In this connection the Study Group recommended that WHO should develop guidelines concerning the type of information needed to assess the possible health risks associated with new chemicals, and with new uses of existing ones, as well as provide technical cooperation to help developing countries in establishing environmental health forecasting systems.

The methods of identifying new or potential environmental pollutants and hazards—comprising the registration system of new chemicals, rapid laboratory bioassay tests for mutagenicity, carcinogenicity, teratogenicity, and screening for ecological effects—as well as the warning systems for adverse health effects (comprising health statistics, special occupational health and environmental surveys, and ecological and epidemiological surveillance), are given wide coverage in another main chapter. Two important recommendations were given on this subject, the first requesting Member States to establish systems for evaluating new chemicals and, when appropriate, for regulating their use; the second recommends the establishment, and then strengthening, of the toxicological data-banks, which should be made readily accessible to the international scientific community.

It is gratifying to note that the Study Group felt the need to identify the topics that should be given priority attention, and so the reader will find a wealth of knowledge and a comprehensive bibliography (though unfortunately without titles of most of the papers published in journals) on each of the following topics: environmental health hazards connected with alternative sources of power, plastics and plasticizers, fire retardants, metals, photosensitizers, and pesticides. The topics are presented in the text, as well as in the 6 annexes—each dealing with one of the above topics, and together constituting the bulk of the booklet (from p. 34 to p. 96).

M. A. F.

**Conservation and Traffic**, by NATHANIEL LICHFIELD & ALAN PROUDLOVE. Sessions Book Trust, The Ebor Press, York, England: xvi + 132 pp., illustr., 24.6 × 18.8 × 1.4 cm, £5.00, 1976.

I found this book very disappointing, because, in spite of its title, it makes no attempt to give a general or operational treatment of the problem of living with urban vehicular traffic. The case which the book treats is important and interesting—the preservation of the historic core of York, now an industrial city—and a full treatment of the handling of the situation would be invaluable. Unfortunately the book is in essence no more than the authors' case for claiming that the city's consultants had not fully justified their recommendations for the siting of an Inner Ring Road for York. Undoubtedly it contains much that is of interest for those who were involved in the controversy aroused by the Inner Ring Road proposals, but those in other communities facing similar problems will find in the book little to help them.

The publication of this book must be considered more a labour of love by Sessions of York than a significant contribution to the problem of reconciling vehicular traffic and living amenities.

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**Tropical Trees: Variation, Breeding and Conservation**, Edited by J. BURLEY & B. T. STYLES. Linnean Society Symposium Series Number 2, being the Proceedings of an International Symposium held at Oxford University, England, April 1975. Academic Press, London–New York–San Francisco: xviii + 244 pp., £12.00 or \$20.25, 1976.

As the publishers indicate in their announcement of this timely book, 'An increasing world population and improved living standards are placing heavy demands on forests and forest products throughout the world. In particular, the utilization of natural forests in the tropics often results in the complete removal of entire ecosystems, or severe genetic impoverishment of component species. Moreover, tropical forests and species are disappearing faster than information on their structure, reproduction, and conservation, is appearing...'

Included in the book are all the papers read at an international symposium held at Oxford University in 1975 jointly by the Linnean Society of London, the Commonwealth Forestry Institute, Oxford, and the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations. Its subject-matter was the genetic variation, breeding (natural and artificial), and conservation, of tropical forest trees. Its object was to examine existing knowledge and current activities, to evaluate their application to tropical forestry programmes, and to consider methods of genetic conservation. The book stresses the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration for the success of conservation schemes, commercial forest plantations, and artificial tree-breeding programmes. In particular, it shows that the ecology of tropical forests must be studied in the light of population genetics.