

BOOK REVIEW

COLLINS FIELD NOTEBOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

Roger Lovegrove and Philip Snow. 1986. William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., London; distributed by Penguin Books, 40 W 23rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10010. $5 \times 7 \frac{3}{4} \times 4 \times \frac{3}{4}$ inches. Illus. by Philip Snow. Index. 128 p. \$21.95.

Here is a truly different kind of field guide. Within a three-section plastic folder the bird student has a compact paperback field guide inserted in the panel that forms the front cover, a British Trust for Ornithology Field List of British Birds inserted in the panel that forms the back cover, and a note pad for writing down observations inserted in a third panel that folds inward against the back cover. The third panel can be inserted between the pages of the field guide to mark the reference while further observations are being made. Although there is not a specified place for a pencil, one fits easily into the crevice along the spine of the plastic folder. The entire package is small enough to fit in most jacket pockets even when the note pad is being used as a bookmark. The back cover of the field guide has a very useful Quick Index that lists 36 groups of birds plus some miscellaneous species that do not belong to any of the groups named. Designed primarily for the beginner, the guide covers the 280 species found most regularly in Britain. The well-written text is presented in complete sentences, as opposed to the telegraphic phrases generally found in field guides. The illustrations, though less detailed than those of Roger Tory Peterson, Arthur Singer, H. Douglas Pratt and others, give good quick impressions. Snow's essay on sketching birds is a pleasant surprise.

Lovegrove and Snow's otherwise very appealing guide to the study of British birds suffers from use of small type in the main text and in the additional material crowded between the illustrations. The problem is compounded by narrow margins and a lack of white space between paragraphs. Anyone who must don reading glasses to look up numbers in the telephone directory will find the *Collins Field Notebook of British Birds* awkward to read in the field even though turning to the proper illustration might be surprisingly easy with just a little experience.

Collins and other publishers offer conventional guides to the birds of Britain or to those of Britain and Europe. Even though the type in most of the other guides is not much larger than that in the *Collins Notebook*, adequate white space makes standard-format guides generally easier to read. Bird watchers who want to have the rare species illustrated will definitely prefer one of the standard guides. Someone planning a trip to Great Britain might want Lovegrove and Snow for the jacket pocket and one of the other guides in the backpack for the rare or really difficult species.

William Collins Sons and Company is to be commended for its innovative approach to the publication of field guides. Its recent issues include field guides to dragonflies and to caterpillars of butterflies and moths in Britain and Europe. When will the major publishers of North American field guides follow the leader?—Eloise F. Potter