

It is divided into two parts — the first deals with nesting dispersion and the pair-bond and the second with clutch size, size of eggs and growth rate. There is also a large clutch of appendices in which a tremendous amount of detail on a wide variety of subjects is summarised — an excellent idea which saves cluttering the main text and helps to keep it easily readable. Every chapter has its summary and eventually there are summaries of the summaries. Though this involves the reader in some repetition he, at least, cannot claim that the argument is ever obscure.

There are a few specific points which seem to merit criticism:—

1. Conclusions reached on the basis of comparison by means in the absence of any other statistical data, may frequently be unjustified (I was surprised, by the way, at how little elementary statistics appear in this book). It is the very use of means in this way that leads to the saying that there are lies, damned lies and statistics.
2. One gets the impression that *all* variation is regarded as adaptive. Need this be so?
3. Virtually all the data Dr. Lack uses seem to be regarded by him as equally reliable. Synthesizers of other people's work are always faced with the problem of assessing its reliability. I wonder whether Dr. Lack should, at times, have been more obviously critical.
4. As an off-shoot of this last point, definitions often vary with the expert, Dr. Lack sometimes omits even giving his own, e.g. there is none for incubation time. How is the reader to know, therefore, whether certain data have been properly combined or compared?
5. When does a natural habitat become unnatural?

Such reservations as these are minor as far as the work as a whole is concerned, but if they are justified in any way they may have led to at least some errors in deduction.

The very pleasant illustrations are by Robert Gillmor; and, as usual, there is a virtually exhaustive bibliography (O. Hilden's paper on clutch size in waterfowl is a notable omission) and an excellent subject and animal index.

— G.R.W.

———— ★ ————

LETTER

A gremlin haunted me when I wrote the paper on "The Occurrence of the Musk Duck *Biziura lobata* (Shaw) in New Zealand." I figured, but did not describe, the right humerus collected by Mr. Russell Price in the creek deposits at Poukawa Swamp, Hawkes Bay, in 1963.

The measurements are, in centimetres:

L	P	M	D
10.2	1.9	0.6	1.215

The bone is very little worn, and appears to be slightly sub-adult.

— R. J. SCARLETT