

ENVIRONMENT

Nature Detective

By Hugh Falkus. 1978. Victor Gollancz (Canadian distributor Clarke Irwin, Toronto). 256 pp., illus. \$22.50.

Falkus is a true nature detective and much can be learned from his methodology. His observations and discussions of how to interpret the behavior of nocturnal or otherwise hard-to-observe animals through their tracks and signs provide instruction and insight to the most experienced naturalists. The photographs and interpretive captions alone make the book worthwhile. I spent many enjoyable hours trying to puzzle out the activities depicted in these excellent illustrations. Later, reading the captions it seemed so obvious. I am sure almost any field-naturalist or serious student of field ecology would enjoy and learn from a similar experience.

A knowledgeable amateur naturalist, Falkus writes in a folksy style, often rambling into personal anecdotes and occasionally introducing technical discussions that many professional biologists would dispute, at least in part. His constant use of local common names leaves the reader who does not have extensive knowledge of British animals and natural history somewhat confused. The discussions of projects with many professional associates such as N. Tinbergen, however, often introduce a high standard of technical information and originality of ideas to offset this. The

professional quality of the photography (Falkus is a professional nature-film producer) is superb.

The seasonal organization of his treatment of the Cumbrian coastal and countryside habitats provides a continuity to his sometimes colloquial and rambling style. The writing is at all times very enjoyable and highly readable. The observations on trout and salmon show why he is an acknowledged expert in this his favorite hobby. There did appear to me to be some obsession with many photographs of half eaten birds, broken eggs, and headless baby rabbits (to Falkus rabbits are nothing but a pest and as such he would advocate their extermination), but then one cannot illustrate such a book with animal tracks alone and much behavior can be learned from the remains of a kill.

I recommend this book as an enjoyable guide to how a field-naturalist can make the most out of casual observation skills during nature walks. It is, of course, highly recommended to anyone interested in or planning a nature tour of Falkus's own home district of Cumbria in Great Britain.

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Life on Forty Acres: a saga of Australian rural life

By Barry P. Moore. 1978. Classey Limited (U.S.A.), 1015 Mockingbird Lane, San Marcos, California 92069. 184 pp., illus. U.S. \$13.00.

Lovers of things Australian take note: Barry Moore's "Life on forty acres" is now available from E. W. Classey Ltd.

The "forty acres" of the title refers to Moore's country retreat in New South Wales just outside Canberra. The name of his retreat is Calosoma, reflecting his interest in Carabidae, and is pronounced Ca-lós-o-ma, reflecting his British background. The "life" of the title is partly autobiographical and partly the natural history of Calosoma observed through the trained eyes of a scientist in the heady first years of owning his own piece of Australian bush. In such a short period one cannot expect a "saga of Australian rural life," of course, but one does find an understanding of the biological processes in action and commentary on the fascinating (even to Australians) plants and animals

of Calosoma. It is in these areas that Moore hits his stride, and, as an example, the chapter on "The Noble Gum" contains some very fluid prose in the description of sclerophyll forests and their lack of a litter fauna. The book ends with a brief discussion on the philosophy of conservation.

Not surprisingly, a book written by an "adopted Australian" will probably be most appreciated by the overseas visitor. Bound in electric blue and black like the Superb Blue Wren on the front cover, the 184 pages are liberally interspersed with Moore's own scraperboard illustrations. A selected bibliography includes further suggested reading and the many fine handbooks now available on the Australian flora and fauna.

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