
Littoral Fauna

Civilized man lives in an environment which differs from that experienced by all other animals. He plunges almost from birth into a world of objects with labels. His first nursery school text shows a cat, a dog or other object underneath each of which is its printed name. Eventually he learns that language is a system of vocal labels or written labels which can be juggled into sentences, paragraphs and even into written book notices. He soon realizes that life can become very embarrassing if he forgets and mixes labels, and refers to a girl friend as a lemon. He lives in a world of labels. He soon thinks labels.

Curiously enough he tends to avoid objects whose names or labels are unknown to him. Unnamed objects confuse his thinking, or actually make certain types of thought (word juggling) difficult or even impossible.

Hence the pleasure one derives from such a volume as the one before us. Miss Eales, Lecturer in the Zoology Department of the University of Reading, has given us just such a label-fixing work. It keys out and puts names, at least down to genera, on the fauna of the between-tide zone of the shores of the British Isles. As she states herself: "Its object is three-fold: (1) To encourage observation of the habitat, habits and structure of the living animal, (2) To supplement with a closer observation in the laboratory, and (3) To provide a preliminary training in systematic work.

British land life is very meager because of the recent glaciation and the difficulty of spread from the south across the North Sea and the Channel and over mountain ranges that fringe the Mediterranean basin. The littoral fauna appears to have been less disturbed perhaps because of its association with the warm Gulf Stream and its direct connections with more southern continental shores. It is a fairly rich life. Comparative anatomy and systematic zoology started their modern development on these very shores. It was this fauna which enthused Cuvier when, as a tutor in the family of the Comte d'Héricy during the French revolution, he lived with that family at Fécamp near Havre on the Channel. His spare hours were spent collecting and dissecting these curious animals. The great English students of the invertebrates were trained on this same fauna.

The material is handled in thirteen Phyla. This conservative taxonomy is carried throughout the book. Thus the ninety per cent of common species are named to species while the accidentals, local and rarer forms, are not given specific treatment. Each phylum section opens with a short bibliography of monographic works on that group. Keys are moderately simple and anatomical terms are taken care of by numerous labels on the many plates of simple line drawings.

The volume gives the student a balanced picture of a North Atlantic seashore fauna. It is satisfying in this matter of putting labels on objects which are usually without names to even the seashore student of zoology. It is well done and by an experienced student of shore life.—*C. H. Kennedy.*

The Littoral Fauna of Great Britain, by N. B. Eales. xvii+300 pp. Cambridge, at the University Press; in New York, the Macmillan Co. 1939. \$3.50.