



—From "The Mating Instinct."

Doe antelope coming back to her hidden fawn.

## Universal Boydom-Girldom

**"The Mating Instinct," by Lorus and Margery J. Milne** (Little, Brown. 243 pp. \$4.50), a study by two zoologists of sexual behavior among the lower orders may well help members of the higher order understand better that most mysterious of all subjects, Sex.

By J. M. Flagler

WITH the possible exception of politics, there is perhaps no other subject of common interest about which man is more essentially naive

than sex. The prude may ignorantly shy from the very mention of the awful word, but does even the wisest night-club jade, tittering at a Dwight Fiske lyric, really display sophistication or merely betray a basic uneasiness about mysteries only dimly comprehended? No matter how, or where, you cut the cake, sex remains a wonder, and if there is any doubt in your mind, you are advised to read "The Mating Instinct" by Lorus and Margery J. Milne.

In this fascinating book, the Milnes, a team of lecturing and writing zoologists, are concerned with sexual behavior among the lower orders. The

proper study of mankind may be man, but if, by dissecting a bull frog, we can discover something helpful about the human alimentary canal, then what might we not learn about the husband-wife relationship by considering the mating habits of the praying mantis or the bighorn sheep? (To suggest the varieties of speculation offered by such a vista, female praying mantises devour their males during the very act of mating, and herds of male bighorns sometimes stage titanic free-for-alls over their harems, ripping out horns and butting each over cliffs.)

While most of the material presented here may be familiar to the scientist or naturalist, it is for organizing it in popular, though not patronizing, form that the authors deserve commendation. Almost every page will be a revelation to those unfortunates who have not had the opportunity to study nature closely and at first hand, and this must surely take in the great mass of citybound civilization. In an early chapter, for instance, the Milnes tell how various animals accomplish the all-important and far from simple feat of identifying members of the opposite sex, some by sight, some by smell, some by voice, some by touch, and some—a lumpish creature called the burrowing shrimp, for instance—just by chance. Most marine animals, on the other hand, don't even bother with introductions; at mating season they just release eggs and sperm into the sea en masse. How these two life-components ever get together is one of those mysteries of sex. Perhaps chemical attraction is the answer, as scientists suspect, or perhaps something else not yet within the compass of human knowledge.

Most females, it is shown, demand that the male pursue them before mating, and combat between males is one of the widespread features of the mating ritual. Even male butterflies will fight over a female, although very often the exertion tires them so much that they finally lose interest in her. The chapters on the difficult subjects of Courtship and Conquest are thoroughly engrossing and written with taste, as, indeed, is most of the book. To quote one random example:

In an English shore bird known as the ruff, the males congregate on a low knoll serving as a display ground, and there maintain a continual show of whirling and sparring with one another. The group activity appears to attract females, and they come, one at a time. Curiously enough, as soon as a female appears all of the males quiet down and spread themselves out on the ground for all the world like a club of

men who have been telling off-color jokes and suddenly become speechless with embarrassment when a lady walks through the room.

"The Mating Instinct," though relatively short, is not a book to be devoured in an evening, but rather to be read in instalments. A well-indexed and illustrated work, it also deserves a place of reference on any stretch of bookshelf devoted to the wonders of creation and the glories of nature, and in a position a good deal closer to Rachel Carson's "The Sea Around Us" than to Dr. Kinsey's volumes.

## Notes

**FOUR FOR NATURE LOVERS:** The insatiable curiosity of the average nature lover is one of the wonderful phenomena of human nature. Even professional naturalists who have spent their lives in the field are continually impressed with the amateur's ability to absorb fresh knowledge—and come back for more. The varied and assorted range of his interests is represented in four recent books which collectively contain a liberal supply of unusual facts. "The Lives of Wild Birds", (Doubleday, \$3.50), the work of Aretas A. Saunders, a former teacher and member of the U.S. Forestry Service, is partly a guide to the identification of birds by such clues as color, habits, songs, and calls. It is also a useful handbook for the person who wishes to observe migrations, nesting cycles, and other subtly organized forms of bird activity.

"Curious Creatures," by Erna Pinner (Philosophical Library, \$4.75), is a survey, complete with original and instructive drawings, of strange animal behavior. The chapter headings indicate some of the book's interesting material—"Nursing Fathers," "Four-Footed Creatures That Fly," "Living Upside Down." A chapter on the struggle for food describes snake-swallowing frogs and a species of starfish which attacks and slowly digests fish. "They Never Talk Back," by Henry Trefflich (Appleton-Century-Crofts, \$3.50), is the story of a man who makes animals his business, a wholesale dealer in wild animals for circuses and zoos. The lion may be king of beasts to romanticists, but to Mr. Trefflich "he's a dime a dozen" and sells for \$150 without many takers. The book includes accounts of Trefflich's adventures in procuring everything from anteaters to zebras.

Most of us have seen one or two

highly magnified photographs of insects which appear like science-fiction monsters, and "Insects Close Up," by Edward S. Ross (University of California Press, \$1.50), is a collection of about 125 such studies—as well as descriptions of the bugs. This interesting rogue's gallery of the insect world includes detailed snapshots of a feeding bedbug, "whose long and intimate association with man seems to have begun in Eurasia many thousands of years ago." It seems that our cave-dwelling ancestors picked up the parasites from bats and swallows, and that most varieties of bedbug still prefer their original hosts. There are also fascinating studies of the mosquito, locust, ladybird beetle, ants, and an especially imposing head-on color photograph of the Jerusalem cricket.

—JOHN PFEIFFER.

**LIFE WITH CLARENCE:** In 1940 a middle-aged and widowed English music teacher found a fallen baby sparrow, crippled and half-dead, near her doorstep. With the lady's loving care, not only did the little fellow pull through; he lived to the incredibly ripe old avian age of twelve, became a wartime London celebrity, and posthumously has made the biggest literary news of his species since Catullus

wrote his ode to Lesbia's pet sparrow back in Julius Caesar's day. "Clarence: The Life of a Sparrow," by Clare Kipps (Putnam, \$2.50), may be a bit special for Americans, but it has been enthusiastically acclaimed and widely and enthusiastically read in England since its publication there two years ago, and with reason.

Mrs. Kipps tells of her dozen happy years with Clarence simply, charmingly, and without pretense. Together they survived the blitz—a bomb-blast once wrecked the bird's cage but failed to ruffle Clarence—and cheered their fellow citizens in shelters, hospitals, and canteens with tricks and songs.

No less an authority than Julian Huxley attests, in a foreword, that Clarence was scientifically remarkable on several scores—his extreme age, his rare adaptability to domestic life, and his unsparrowlike ability to sing. Mrs. Kipps, however, eschews any claims of special powers and doesn't even believe that Clarence was a *rara avis*—just a run-of-the-mill sparrow down on his luck, a fellow creature whom she helped out of a jam. Her reward, as she indicates with spiritual awe, was beyond any expectation: all those years of delightful companionship.

—J. M. F.



"The movie they just made from his book has given him an idea for a new novel."