



Nature's Calendar
introduction by
Chris Packham
Collins, hb, pp256, £17.99

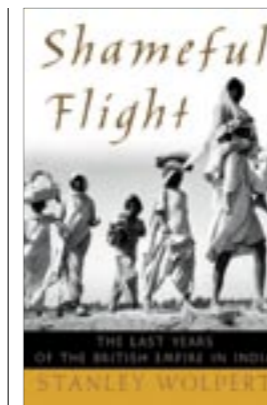
Published to coincide with the television series of the same name, *Nature's Calendar* would make an excellent investment for any budding amateur naturalist. Broken down into a month-by-month digest, the book is packed full of hints and tips on how to get the best out of your local wilderness areas, providing detailed directions, weblinks and opening hours for each of the 120 UK-wide locations featured within.

On the whole, despite a sometimes slightly basic writing style, the authors do a fine job of trying to inspire readers to get out and experience the British countryside for themselves, and their enthusiasm for the subject matter is unstintingly infectious (although I suspect that they're fighting a bit of a losing battle in trying to make lichen sound glamorous).

The book is an instructive and

interesting read. So if you have a yen to watch otters at dawn or badger cubs at dusk, to see golden eagles hunting over the Isle of Aran or to walk alongside a herd of up to 300 red deer, then this is the book to tell you where, and more importantly when, you are most likely to be able to do so.

Obviously, nature is nothing if not unpredictable, so even armed with this inside knowledge it's pretty much guaranteed that you'll spend at least one fruitless expedition hunched up in a pokey hide with water dripping down the back of your anorak, quietly wishing that you were still in bed. However, all thoughts of comfort will evaporate on those happy occasions when your patience finally does pay off, rewarding you with a wildlife encounter that will knock any television-filtered African safari into a cocked hat. **Jo Sargent**



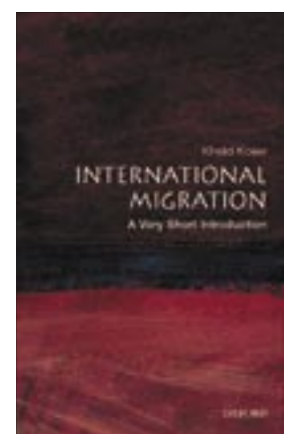
Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India
by **Stanley Wolpert**
Oxford University Press,
hb, pp238, £16.99

The partition of British India during the 1940s was the most emotive episode in the disbandment of the Empire, and there are plenty of books on the subject already on the library shelves. The publication of *Shameful Flight* will add heat to the debate, but whether it sheds light on the period is another matter entirely.

The book takes as its starting, central and end position that the destabilisation and death that followed the transfer of power was the responsibility of one man, Lord Louis Mountbatten. Mountbatten, or 'Dickie' as he was known, was the flamboyant and charming cousin of George VI charged with seeing through the divestment of the Jewel in the Crown. He had been ordered by the prime minister of the day, Clement Attlee, to be sure to leave India a unified single federation, and upon no account allow it to become fragmented. The hugely inexperienced Mountbatten rushed the process through and the result was chaos, for which we're still paying, claims Stanley Wolpert.

Given that more than a million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims died as a direct result of their disenfranchisement, Wolpert undeniably has a point. He trawls through the accepted facts of the story of partition, from the fall of Singapore to the death of Mahatma Gandhi with ease and familiarity. His research is thorough and he compresses a complex tale into a lucid and readable but, sadly, flawed introduction to the topic.

And it is flawed. Despite purporting to be an academic analysis of the partition, *Shameful Flight* says more about the author's personal views than his subject. Frequently attacking Mountbatten with the gusto of a man who has only just discovered the dead can't sue for libel, the severity of Wolpert's anti-imperialist position ruins what otherwise might have been a perfectly average book. **Nick Smith**



International Migration: A Very Short Introduction
by **Khalid Koser**
Oxford University Press, pb,
pp140, £6.99

As a primer in the tangled webs of international migration, this book works very well. It is straightforward, fact-rich and jargon-averse. Khalid Koser is fully aware of the limitations of any analysis of the movements of people around the globe. Above all else, the evidence is infuriatingly scant and almost always incomplete. Even in a country such as Britain, with its sophisticated mechanisms of data gathering, huge leaps of statistical faith are required. Many of our migration figures, Koser reports, are based on the International Passenger Survey: a tiny sample of 2,200 people arriving at ports and airports. From this drop in the migratory ocean, the bigger picture is skilfully (but almost certainly inaccurately) extrapolated.

All of Koser's conclusions are, therefore, offered up with caution, but also with considerable authority. He is rightly obsessed with defining terms as accurately as possible: distinguishing between the various types of migrant – economic, political,

irregular (or illegal) and so forth. He is also finely attuned to recent developments in the nature of international migration: the fact that the majority of the world's 200 million migrants now live in the developed world; the fact that the percentage of women migrants is increasing significantly; the fact that revolutions in travel (much cheaper flights, for instance) and communications (not least the internet) have transformed the opportunities and awareness of those seeking new lives in different parts of the world.

Koser is even-handed throughout, paying due attention to the security risks posed by immigration but also stressing the enriching opportunities that migration offers host cultures and economies. His reason for writing the book, he explains, is to "try to set the tone for a more rational debate about international migration. That debate should consider the evidence rather than rely on exaggerated media reports." Amen to that. **Jonathan Wright**

Feeding People is Easy
by **Colin Tudge**
Pari Publishing, pb, pp186, £9.99

One summer morning in 1974, Colin Tudge had an epiphany: "That all the official lore from on high, from government-approved high-tech industry, was as near as makes no difference the most absolute nonsense." A thought worthy of general application, perhaps, but Tudge was specifically referring to traditional methods of food production.

Back then, the food technologists' view was that "textured vegetable protein" was the only way to feed the world: if that were so, Tudge reasoned, how come overpopulation was such a problem? From this starting point, he quickly decides that policy is the root cause of food shortages, and



that if the world is to feed itself, the will of the people must prevail.

The challenge, then, is to make democracy work – true democracy, that is, which includes the right to get rid of leaders once they're no longer fit for purpose – because, as Amartya Sen observed, famine doesn't occur in democracies. New economic models are needed too. The current form of capitalism, biased towards winners, is a corruption – a "weird extrapolation" – of how it's supposed to work. Luckily, he tells us, "some people are on the case".

This book, a closely argued examination of an all-important problem, packs a lot into its relatively brief length. Nor is Tudge pessimistic – the task of feeding the world's population is well within our capabilities, he assures us, provided we're allowed to get on with it. Whether or not this will happen remains to be seen; meanwhile, Tudge has given us plenty to chew on. **Mick Herron**

TOP 10 Writer's reads



John Pilkington is a travel lecturer and the author of three travel books, including *An Englishman in Patagonia*. He has also produced several programmes for BBC Radio 4

1. In Patagonia by Bruce Chatwin (Vintage Classics, £7.99)

A controversial account – part fact, part fiction – that got closer to the nub of Patagonia than anything written before or since

2. A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush by Eric Newby (Picador, £7.99)

Still unmatched after nearly 50 years in print. This hilarious and nicely understated description of an ill-fated journey marked the debut of one of my favourite travel writers

3. Forbidden Journey by Ella Maillart (Out of print)

The story of Peter Fleming's legendary 1935 journey across Asia, written by his indefatigable and long-suffering companion

4. The Snow Leopard by Peter Matthiessen (Vintage, £7.99)

He didn't find the snow leopard, but the story of his search for it moved me to tears

5. The Travels by Marco Polo (Penguin Classics, £9.99)

The original Silk Road adventurer had a keen geographer's eye and an engaging way with words. Still a brilliant read after 700 years

6. Fragile Edge by Maria Coffey (Arrow, £8.99)

A poignant and thought-provoking account of how two men climbed Mount Everest and didn't come back

7. Jupiter's Travels by Ted Simon (Penguin, £8.99)

The definitive adventure story, with lots of suspense and a cast of outrageous characters

8. Seven Years in Tibet by Heinrich Harrer (Flamingo, £8.99)

A masterly piece of travel writing, and a rare record of Tibet's last years of independence under the looming shadow of China

9. Blank on the Map by Eric Shipton (republished in *The Six Mountain-Travel Books*; Baton Wicks, £18.99)

The famous account of pre-war Central Asia by the 'explorer's explorer'

10. The Wind in My Wheels by Josie Dew (Time Warner, £8.99)

The world's favourite cyclist finds humour around every corner, and I promise that after a few pages, you'll be laughing too. Save this one for a rainy day

