

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF TREES. Herbert L. Edlin.
Weidenfeld and Nicholson; The World Naturalist Series.
£10.00 (plus tax).

TREES AND BUSHES OF EUROPE. Oleg Polunin with drawings
by Barbara Everard. Oxford University Press. £5.25 (plus tax).

One might begin by asking who these two books are intended for. Neither author is specific on this point. Edlin covers the whole of forestry and a number of related subjects in 260 pages, plus 66 monochrome photographs. The compression required, while done with the greatest of skill, has led at times to excessive generalisation, and at times apparently to despair: "Altogether the restriction of water loss is a complex requirement for which varied solutions have been found". The rapid succession of concentrated factual information would be quite undigestible to the general reader, and would be of little use to a forester, except perhaps as a handy *aide-memoire* to material which might have faded in his memory since student days. The book can, however, be

recommended to students of second level education in search of material for those interminable "projects" (which seem now to be as integral a part of education as mitching was a few decades ago).

On the whole Edlin maintains an objective attitude, rarely allowing his personal opinions to come through, as in his reference to "some obscure long-haired or densely bearded *researcher*" (Would he be any better at his job after a haircut and shave?) "on his way to speedy promotion to a professional chair". He seems to regard forestry as a rather static enterprise, and makes no attempt to look into the future. On two separate occasions he refers to the "trifling" amounts of nutrients removed in timber harvesting, whereas current trends in technology suggest that these removals may become quite significant in the near future.

Polunin's preface claims to "enable the user (not defined) to identify all the native trees and bushes that grow wild in Europe to over two metres". It will — up to a point; that is, provided the user is satisfied to have *a* name for his specimen but is not too fussy about 100% botanical exactitude.

Initial choice is based on leaf shape, 14 classes. From this you decide on your genus or species. In the latter case you check your choice against the illustrations and text. One might for instance wonder, though, whether it is helpful to read that the lemon (*Citrus limon*) is "unmistakable when bearing ripe fruit". If you decide on a genus you may be faced with a dichotomous key. Right; we decide we have a pine and turn the key to *Pinus*. First question: leaves in clusters of two or not? Clusters of two. O.K. Next question: seeds wingless or with well-developed wings? *Seeds?* Wow!

The colour photographs, though small — up to eight to a page, are quite superb, and in themselves make this book worth having.

Wood Kerne

OTHER PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Northern Ireland Agriculture, 35th Annual General Report of the Department of Agriculture, Year ended 31 March, 1976. Belfast: HMSO, £2.00.

(Yes. 1976! — Ed.)

Report of the Director-General of Forests for the year ended 31 March, 1976. Government Printer, Wellington, New Zealand. 45c.

(Yes. Again 1976! — Ed.)