

be bright or beautiful, aggressive or sickly. But when he reaches his mid-twenties his brain cells stop reproducing (most geniuses have made their major contributions by that time of life). After middle age, his bodily immunity weakens, and cancers, especially sarcomas and leukemia, and cardiovascular disease strike him more frequently. All this appears to be written in his genes; the oddities in people, Burnet argues, stem from errors produced by DNA-handling enzymes.

AUDUBON

by John Chancellor
Viking, 1978
224 pp. \$17.95
L of C 78-8465
ISBN 0-670-14053-8

**VANISHING BIRDS:
Their Natural History
and Conservation**

by Tim Halliday
Holt, 1978
296 pp. \$16.95
L of C 77-19010
ISBN 0-03-043561-7

**GOLDEN BATS &
PINK PIGEONS**

by Gerald Durrell
Simon & Schuster, 1978
190 pp. \$9.95
L of C 78-17446
ISBN 0-671-24372-1

Natural history? Or art? These three books combine both—though Britain's John Chancellor calls his illustrated study of John James Audubon (1785–1851) a biography. Chancellor combines material from the naturalist-painter's collected letters and journals with the findings of earlier biographers and his own shrewd observations. Audubon would kill 25 brown pelicans in order to draw a single male bird, writes Chancellor, partly for the fun of killing them and partly for the sake of giving accurate anatomical descriptions of the species and their individual variations. Many of the famous bird studies are splendidly reproduced.

Oxford ethologist Tim Halliday, also a painter of wildlife, has illustrated his careful, conservationist text with 16 well-rendered color plates and 46 drawings, plus his own maps. Halliday makes a strong plea for more effective worldwide measures to save such vanishing birds as the Eskimo Curlew, Abbott's Booby, and the small falcon called the Mauritius Kestrel.

This kestrel is among the unusual fauna that Gerald Durrell describes in the latest of his chatty little illustrated books about humans and other animals. He reports on an expedition to the Mascarenes to save three rare species of Round Island reptiles, the Golden Fruit Bats of Rodrigues Island, and the Pink Pigeons of Mauritius from the fate of the latter island's long-gone Dodo. All these creatures were rescued and are now safely installed on the Channel Island of Jersey under Durrell's protection.