

JAN 21 1982

A NATURALIST ON A TROPICAL FARM

by Alexander F. Skutch. 1980. University of California Press (2223 Fulton Street, Berkeley, CA 94720). 405 p. \$16.95.

This interesting, readable book is a delightful personal account of the author's life on a farm in southern Costa Rica. The unpretentious language along with the format of the text should make it a welcome and useful source of information about tropical farm life.

The format is highly effective—ranging from a thorough, yet simple, description of the farm and its surroundings in the initial chapter, through a month-by-month description of climatic and biotic variation over the course of a year, to a warm personal description of some of the unique flora and fauna of the region. Especially praiseworthy is the author's explanation of the social and cultural conflicts he encountered while attempting to operate his farm in a preservation/conservation manner that was quite different from local custom.

Another high point of the book is the excellent black-and-white photographs by Dana Gardner. The pictures are carefully positioned to effectively support the text material.

This book would be a welcome addition to any library or high school reference shelf. Its humanistic approach to describing the natural history of a tropical farm is as valuable as the factual knowledge it presents.

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