



*These islands;  
the remnant peaks of a lost continent,  
roof of an old world, molten droppings  
from earth's bowels, gone cold;  
ribbed with rock, resisting the sea's corrosion  
for an age, and an age to come.*

from *Album*, by A. R. D. Fairburn (1904-57)



New Zealanders are an island people; descended from islanders, living on islands, and, if they frequent coastal population centres, always aware of islands: Rangitoto, Motiti, the Sugarloafs, Kapiti, Green Island, Stewart Island. The island constellations surrounding the mainland amount to an astonishing 634 offshore and 30 outlying. Many of these are the final refuges of our endangered plants and wildlife whose importance cannot be too highly stressed. The articles in the following pages describe the threats to and wonders of our island havens, reminding us that "the price of freedom is eternal vigilance."

1. Moturoa Island, New Plymouth. Photo: Taranaki Catchment Commission; 2. Hen and Chickens (Taranga), near Whangarei. Photo: Terry Fitzgibbon; 3. Shy Mollymawks, Disappointment Island. Photo: Rod Russ; 4. Taranga Island. Photo: Dick Anderson; 5. Female Hooker sea lion, Auckland Island. Photo: Fred Bruemmer; 6. Orange spotted nudibranch molluscs adjacent to a sea egg, Sugarloafs, New Plymouth. Photo: Lesley Bolton.