

OKARITO — THE BOOK



From her Sumner home overlooking Canterbury's Pegasus Bay, children's author Astrid Neumann surveys a world that contrasts markedly with the one she has chosen to write about — the fight to save the forests of Okarito.

On the settled east coast, the Pacific Ocean meets a gently sloping shore; on the West Coast the Tasman Sea's moods are more violent. Not far inland, however, it is all quiet contemplation amid the stately rimu forest.

It was here in the mid-1970s early-1980s that the conservation movement dug its heels in over logging in South Okarito and Waikukupa State Forests, pressing for them to be included in Westland National Park.

This is the story that Astrid Neumann tells in her first book, *Okarito*.

Lying deep in South Westland, between

the Southern Alps and the sea, Okarito has been much acclaimed for its scenic beauty, encompassing coastal lagoons and rimu forest.

In 1976 the loggers moved into North Okarito to be confronted by energetic conservation groups who attempted to influence the wider public to their point of view. For the next six years, Okarito figured in many headlines; in 1979 all seemed lost when the Minister of Forests announced that South Okarito was to be opened up for logging.

Undeterred, conservationists fought the decision, until finally in 1981 South Okarito and Waikukupa Forests were added to Westland National Park. At last the park's boundaries ran all the way from the mountains to the sea.

The book had its genesis in a field trip to the West Coast in 1985. Society West Coast Conservation Officer, Kevin Smith, sparked Astrid Neumann's enthusiasm when he led a group to Okarito, and her admiration for his work on the West Coast resulted in her dedicating the book to him.

She feels that in New Zealand there are few, if any books on conservation themes for children.

"There is practically nothing about conservation in New Zealand for children up to the age of 10 to read. I felt there was a gap that needed filling," she says.

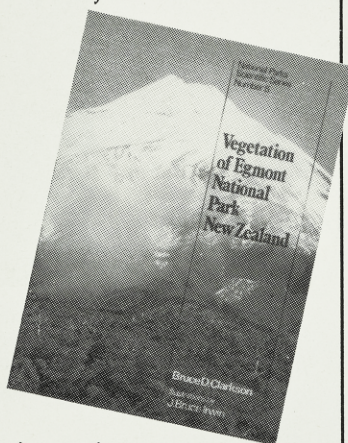
Born in Austria, Astrid Neumann arrived in New Zealand at the age of eight. Her mother, Irina Kalnins, was a well known ballet dancer and her father an architect. She herself teaches art at Kingslea Girls School in Christchurch.

Her hope is to produce a further book, this time on Hori Sinclair's wetland at Wai-pori, south of Dunedin. She considers him a remarkable person whose long running struggle to retain one of the country's most important wetlands would provide an intriguing and instructive tale for children.

Astrid Neumann has generously donated a percentage of the royalties of her book Okarito to the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. We urge members to buy a copy as a means of supporting the Society's work. It can be obtained through the Society's mail order service (see catalogue with this magazine) at the price of \$12.00 (inc GST).

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OKARITO

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