



### **New Zealand Wetlands: A Management Guide**

by Robert Buxton (*Environmental Council and the Department of Conservation*)

This guide will be of most use to wetland managers and landowners wanting to create or manage wetlands. It describes the values of wetlands, their benefits to fish, birds and people. The main section is a detailed guide to wetland restoration and management. It has information on the protection of wetland and their water systems, and a comprehensive list of organisations offering assistance and expertise in wetland matters. Without Pam Cromarty (DoC) and Gordon Stephenson's guidance, this project from the late Environmental Council would not have seen the light of day. Available from Department of Conservation, PO Box 10-420, Wellington at \$19.95 + \$2 p&cp.  
Mark Bellingham

### **Native Forests of New Zealand**

by John Halkett (*GP Publications*)  
\$39.95

With only two slim chapters on native forests and their ecology, this book should more honestly be called "Indigenous Forestry in New Zealand". It is almost entirely an account of the demise of native forests at the hands of successive waves of settlers and ever more efficient logging technologies. As an account of the evolution of government forestry policy it is interesting reading, and more honest than Allsop's 50-year history of the NZ Forest Service. Conservationists reading this book will be surprised to note that the historic public campaigns for forest protection, from Waipoua to South Westland, barely rate a mention.

The shallow treatment of the natural values of native forests is also disappointing, and reflects the author's expertise in forestry. His challenge to the popular view of the early Maori as benign forest conservationists will stimulate further debate. This is

not the last word on native forests nor on the interpretation of the history of the destruction of 75 percent of our native forest heritage.

Mark Bellingham

### **Whale Watch – a Guide to New Zealand's Whales and Dolphins**

by Geoffrey J. Cox (*Collins*)  
\$24.95

The author's attractive drawings supplemented by an informative, well-researched text make this whale book stand apart from the rest. The book concentrates on the whales and dolphins commonly found around New Zealand, giving a brief mention to the rarities, but illustrating every species. The whaling era, fossil whales, whale biology and modern day threats such as set and drift gill nets are covered in introductory chapters. From orange-roughy-munching sperm whales to the speedy 48-km-per-hour sei whales and 80-year-old orcas, the author manages to pack in many interesting facts. This is a thoroughly readable book for the amateur whale and dolphin enthusiast.

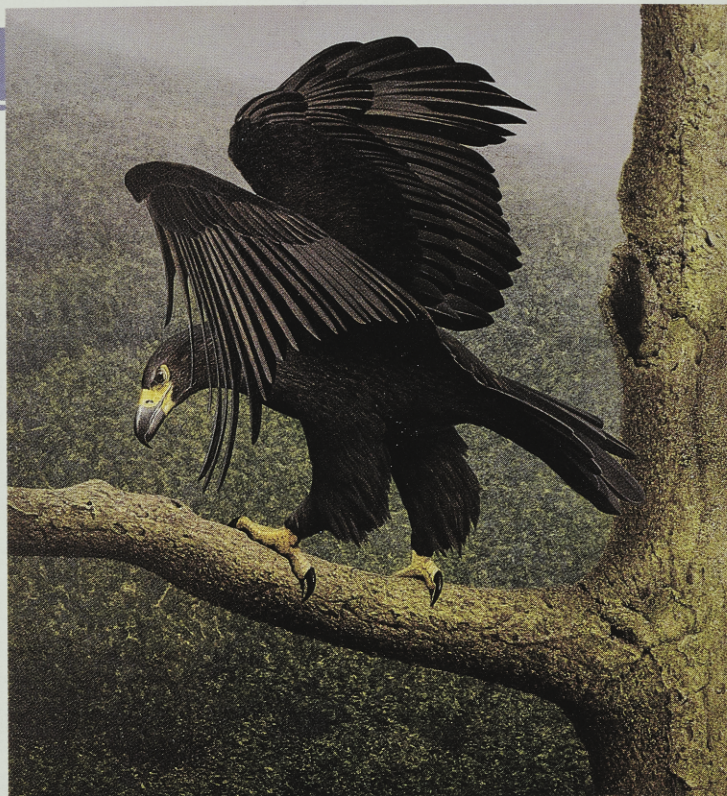
Alan Tennyson

### **Kiwi: a secret life**

by Jim Jolly (*New Zealand Natural Heritage Foundation*) \$19.95

"Emerging from the burrow the kiwi stretches to his full height and with bill raised sniffs the air. . .". In *Kiwi: a secret life* Jim Jolly combines his experience as a wildlife scientist and kiwi researcher with narrative recording the little known events in the life of the kiwi.

The book includes a fascinating account of a night in the life of a kiwi and the life cycle of a young kiwi from conception, incubation and hatching of the egg, through the first weeks of life and growth to adulthood. Jolly's accounts of finding and tracking kiwi in the wild lead to a discussion of the unique features of the kiwi, reasons for the decline of the species and strategies for assisting kiwi recovery.



Paul Martinson's illustration of the New Zealand eagle from *New Zealand's Extinct Birds*. This bird was the largest bird of prey known and had a wing-span of almost three metres. It became extinct maybe as recently as 500 years ago.

The book is the first title in the *Nature of New Zealand* series published by the Natural Heritage Foundation. Its mixture of science and story will be popular with young people, and make this book an important new reference for schools and libraries, in an area which is currently starved of quality resources.

Chris Wratt

### **New Zealand's Extinct Birds**

by Brian Gill and Paul Martinson (*Random Century New Zealand Ltd*) \$49.95

The family group of huia on the dust jacket is a taste of what readers can expect, in what is undoubtedly the best book yet produced on New Zealand's extinct birds. Paul Martinson's illustrations are stunning and Brian Gill's text is a fine accompaniment for its accuracy and clarity.

Oliver's 1955 edition of *New Zealand Birds* included some of these species, but since that time there has been extensive revision of moa taxonomy, with the number of species reduced from 28 to 11, and the extensive work of Ron Scarlett, Trevor Worthy and Phil Millener on a range of subfossil dune and cave bird bone deposits. This work has

added a number of new species and more information on previously described species.

The section on prehuman extinctions has put some flesh around a few obscure bones from 2-40 million years ago. This includes 13 penguins (including the 1.5-metre, 100-kilogram giant penguin), the bizarre false-tooth pelicans (with one twice the size of an albatross!) and an extinct albatross. The section on moa covers their ecology, diet and breeding. But I found the section on *Other Pre-European Extinctions* the most interesting, with 21 birds from nine different families.

The paucity of our knowledge of extinct seabirds is highlighted by this book. New species and forms lie undescribed in collections of bones and the odd study skin which await the same taxonomic intensity that has gone into our land birds.

This book serves to emphasise the fact that Polynesian settlers and early Maori extinguished at least 32 bird species before Europeans arrived. As with the settlement of Hawaii and other islands in the Pacific, they relied heavily on easily available food (birds, marine mammals and fish) until they were forced to revert to a largely horticultural economy. ♦

Mark Bellingham