

## Book reviews

### The Forest and Bird Book of Nature Walks

by David Collingwood and E. V. Sale, revised by Joanna Wright (Reed) \$29.95

When the first edition of Forest and Bird's walks book was published in 1985 it was a great success as it was one of the few such guide books available that covered all of New Zealand.

That first edition, in setting out the favourite walks of Forest and Bird members around the country made great use of the depth of local knowledge of those members.

Since then the range of walks has increased and today there is a proliferation of walk and tramping books for parts or all of the country. But this new edition is still a leader in its field, extensively revised and upgraded and describing 154 walks from North Cape to Stewart Island.

Joanna Wright who updated the book is well known for her *Tramping in South Island Forest Parks* and has done a fine job of distilling the essentials of each walk into a short description but retaining particularly interesting features. The walks range in length from a 15-minute stroll to a full day hike. The new edition also maintains the strong emphasis on the flora and fauna which can be found on each walk.

It is now in a smaller size that fits easier into the car glovebox or a daypack pocket. The maps are much clearer and the descriptions are simple and easy to follow. The new edition has a number of new nature walks, at the expense of a few arduous walks and tramps as the latter are now described in some of the tramping books. I am sure this will not be the last edition of this popular book. Excellent value.

Mark Bellingham

### Which Native Tree?

by Andrew Crowe (Viking Pacific) \$19.95

This is the best short guide yet to the 50 or so most common New Zealand trees. The book combines simple descriptions, clear photos of leaves and fruit, line drawings of the full tree plus distribution maps and altitude



*The world's rarest plant grows on the Three Kings Islands off the northern tip of the North Island. The small tree, Pennantia baylisiana, has been reduced by goats to one wild specimen – a female. Goats have now been removed from the islands but the survival of the species depends on the success of a number of seedlings currently being grown from a recent freak self-fertilisation. From Natural History of New Zealand.*

graphs of where the tree grows in the wild.

The centrepiece of Crowe's guide is a number of well thought out graphic "leaf keys" to guide the reader through the options for the identification of any species. For example, if you follow the path of "leaves toothed", "over 5 cm long", then "under 10 cm long", "whitish underneath" but no "curled edges" you will correctly arrive at kotukutuku, *Fuchsia excorticata*. You can then turn to a full description of that species. If there is a criticism of the descriptions it would be an overemphasis on the human "uses" of the tree rather than its natural values.

A useful addition would have been the family name of each species – a help for those who want to understand more about plant relationships.

Ian Close

### Natural History of New Zealand

by Nic Bishop (Hodder & Stoughton) \$59.95

New Zealand has long-needed a good up-to-date and well-illustrated overview of this country's natural world. Nic Bishop has come up with the goods.

Bishop begins by explaining why New Zealand's natural world before the late arrival of humans was so different from anywhere else, and then takes us

through New Zealand, habitat by habitat, concentrating on the processes that bind ecosystems together.

The book's strength is in the details and examples of the natural interactions and processes which Bishop provides.

The book shows how organisms have adapted to live in their

own particular part of the world – the mountains, the inland waters, geothermal pools, caves, the coast, islands and even farmland and exotic forests. A chapter on the sea takes a welcome look at the world's last great wilderness, one whose workings we still only poorly understand.

Of course the sad thing is that the more New Zealanders learn about their natural history the more they find out what has been lost and what is in the process of being lost. As Bishop says:

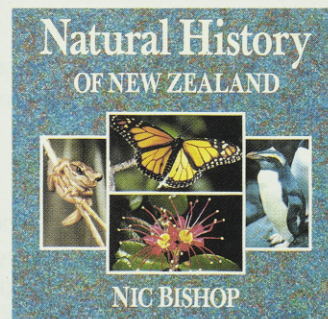
A growing understanding of the importance of ecology has laid the basis for the wide concerns, not just for rare plants and animals but for the continued welfare of this planet's environment. We are now starting to realise that we have been consuming the very environment we need to survive.

Financial assistance from Tasman Forestry as part of the Tasman Accord project has helped to keep this beautifully produced and copiously illustrated book at a reasonable price.

Ian Close

**At last, a complete, one-volume guide to the plants and animals of New Zealand, their habitats, and how they survive and prosper together.**

## Natural History OF NEW ZEALAND



- The first comprehensive guide to all aspects of the natural world around us, written in a popular style.
- Interesting and informative text, offset by over 250 eye-catching colour photographs, and diagrams.
- Respect for nature and commitment to conservation major themes throughout the book.

**Natural History of New Zealand** is an essential addition to any nature-lover's bookshelf.

**\$59.95**

Hodder and Stoughton

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