

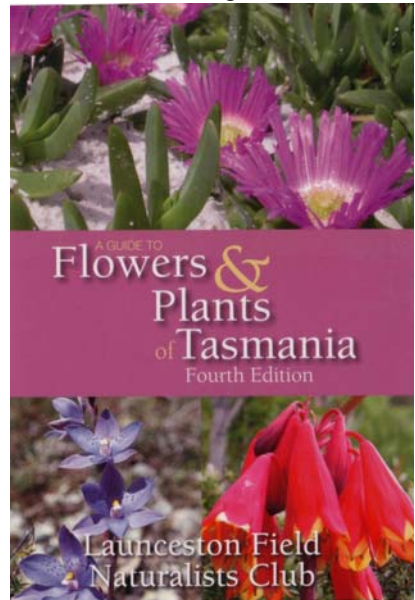
orchid experts, drawing collectively on many decades of field experience. The result is the most comprehensive State reference on orchid flowering available.

By virtue of its ease of use, accessibility and identification of accurate windows for locating our often-cryptic orchids, it will actually assist in conservation by enabling land managers and consultants to more easily comply with the survey requirements of a range of land-use planning processes. The use of this guide will enhance efforts to locate new populations and increase our understanding of the distribution of orchid species. I commend this guide and strongly recommend its use as a reference whenever surveys for orchids are undertaken.

A Guide to Flowers & Plants of Tasmania (Fourth Edition) by
Launceston Field Naturalists Club (edited by Marion Simmons, Hans & Annie Wapstra), Reed New Holland, 2008, paperback, 176 pages.

REVIEWED BY: Mark Wapstra, 29 Suncrest Avenue, Lenah Valley, Tasmania 7008, email: mark@ecotas.com.au

A Guide to Flowers & Plants of Tasmania was first published in 1981 – in 2008 its fourth edition was released. This was always one of the best field guides for Tasmanian flora but I for one am glad that the Launceston Field Naturalists Club decided to ignore the old adage “if it isn’t broken, don’t try to fix it”! The fourth edition is not bigger (in fact, it’s actually about 2 cm shorter, which is always good for a field guide) but it is better. First, the revised style is modern and the layout much easier on the eye (fonts, styles, text spacing and colours are all much better selected). Second, the book is released with a plastic cover, recognising that its main audience carry the book in their jacket pockets, shove it to the bottom of a backpack or leave it lying around the floor of the car (no disrespect intended, of course). Third, the text has been updated and is now much more consistent within and between species and sections. Names of species are in line with recent taxonomic changes (of which there have been many to grapple with) and common names follow another recent publication, *The Little Book of Common Names for Tasmanian Plants*. And last, but not least, the Launceston Field Naturalists Club



have taken the opportunity to update many of the illustrated plants with some very good new photographs (and the quality is maintained during printing so that colours of flowers are realistic).

About 265 native species are illustrated in the fourth edition. I think that the range of species selected is appropriate. Perhaps my only slight criticism is that the guide still doesn't include truly aquatic species but I must say that this comment probably arises because of my recent interest in this habitat, and that aquatic macro-botany is a rather specialised field beyond the scope of this guide. I also suspect that the authors had to find a balance between simply updating the earlier edition and creating an entirely new product. There is a big difference between writing a full-on illustrated flora for the specialist botanist and a useful field guide for a wide audience. While I still think there is room on the market for a field guide with more species illustrated, *A Guide to Flowers & Plants of Tasmania* still represents a very useful product. I have a shelf-full of field guides from all over Australia, specialised regional floras and a filing cabinet crammed with taxonomic literature: yet I still often refer to the LFNC's excellent product. Field guides on Tasmanian flora have come and gone and some have been more useful than others but *A Guide to Flowers & Plants of Tasmania* has stood the test of time and use. In fact, for over a decade now I have been recommending it to anyone who asks for a one-stop shop to identify our plants in the field. With the release of the new-look fourth edition, I'll continue to strongly recommend *A Guide to Flowers & Plants of Tasmania* to anyone with even a passing interest in Tasmania's unique and fascinating flora.

Tuna by Richard Ellis, *A Borzoi Book (Random House)*, 2008, hardback, 334 pages.

REVIEWED BY: Jim Paterson West Hobart, Tasmania 7000

Richard Ellis has written and illustrated over a dozen books on natural history. *The Empty Ocean* and *No Turning Back* are two of these, which, like *Tuna*, deal with the depletion of wildlife to an endangered status or actual extinction by our planet's most voracious predator, *Homo sapiens*.

The list of extinctions is long and most of us only recall a few of the more commonly referred to – the great auk, the dodo, the aurochs, the moa and the passenger pigeon. The passenger pigeon was the most numerous bird on earth. It numbered into the billions in North America in the early 1800s and darkened the sky as they passed in there huge flocks. They were shot at by “sportsmen” – one is recorded as having shot 30,000 to qualify for a prize! The last one died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914.