

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.

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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.

Near to becoming extinct, the American bison was saved by dedicated groups like The Bison Society and there are now reserves where their numbers are slowly increasing.

From an Australian perspective it is argued by some that Professor Tim Flannery's suggestion in the book *The Future Eaters*, that our species was responsible for the extinction of the mega fauna is unproven. Nevertheless, the fact is that they are no longer with us. Slow-moving, large lumps of easily-killed protein, they kept the early settlers forty or fifty thousand years ago well fed for millennia. And to our shame we knocked off the thylacine – the Tasmanian tiger, the last survivor walking the length of its cage for the last year of its life in the zoo on the Domain in Hobart, Tasmania.

Tuna, before long, will surely join these ranks along with other sea creatures captured by seine nets, long lines and drift nets. All these will catch everything that comes by or takes a bite. Tuna fishermen are not interested in “incidentals” that are caught – shark, dolphin or albatross, which are cast overboard, dead, of course; although shark will have their fins removed, alive or dead and then thrown overboard. Not unlike the earlier practice of killing a bison for its tongue and letting the rest rot.

Richard Ellis has done a tremendous amount of research and travelled the world gathering his alarming facts. The statistics quoted on tonnages of tuna taken and processed legally, considering the warnings voiced continually by ichthyologists and marine biologists that the industry is shooting itself in the foot, are unbelievable – unbelievable until the lobbying of governments around the world by rich and powerful and obviously very professional fishing groups is put into the equation. Billions of dollars are at stake.

When one tuna can return a fisherman \$100,000 and that figure is multiplied ten times by the time it hits a sashimi gourmet's plate @ \$75 for a 2 ounce serve, it is understandable, from the fisherman's point of view, and indeed every other operator on the way to the consumer's mouth, that interference by some Greenpeace do-gooder is not going to be good enough reason to forego such lucrative returns.

In 1969, the International Commission for the Conservation of Tuna was formed – ICCAT. It's been about as effective as the League of Nations was. High ideals but no teeth. It does seem that the only factor that will eventually control the tuna industry will be the absence of *tuna*.

Ellis gives the reader plenty of time to reflect on the deadly sin, greed. Greed that is blind to any consequences except immediate profit. Greed that will go to any lengths to get what it wants, aided and abetted by every modern technological device. Greed that hides behind a facade of “scientific research” and somehow gets

a political nod to continue its hypocrisy. Greed that will eventually kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

As I write this, the American financial system is collapsing around the greedy and the taxpayers have been asked to donate \$7,000,000,000 to keep things afloat. The world-wide tuna fishing industry would do well to take a lesson on what this deadly sin can do when it gets out of hand.

POETRY

Sonnet for a shearwater by *Jim Paterson*

Our largest ocean is your great domain,
Your flight from north to south goes on each year,
Through storm and tempest, hail and sleet and rain;
And when the urge to mate is getting near,
Your millions will be seen upon the sea
And each, with mate, will land and find its nest;
A year away each homing bird will be---
They never fail this navigation test.
Then turn about down in their burrow deep
They'll incubate the egg that she has laid,
And each the other one will feed and keep,
And dance attendance, like a chambermaid.
And then you'll see, one dark and stormy night,
Their fledgling start its fearful maiden flight.