

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **A Census of the Vascular Plants of Tasmania**

by *A.M. Buchanan A. McGeary-Brown & A.E. Orchard*

*Reviewed by P.A. Collier*

This publication is the second Tasmanian Herbarium Occasional Publication. The text is in two major sections: a seventy-four-page list of the names of the higher plants which are native or naturalised in Tasmania and an eight-page index to the genera in Tasmania. Such lists form a valuable reference for those concerned with the scientific naming of Tasmania's plants.

The last time that a complete treatment of the Tasmanian flora appeared was in 1903, eighty-six years ago. This was *The Tasmanian Flora* by Leonard Rodway. Being a flora, it includes a full description of the Tasmanian species as well as keys to help with identification. A census includes just the names with no other description and is not useful for identification of plants.

One role of a herbarium is to keep up to date with the current names for local plants. The Tasmanian Herbarium is no exception, and they have kept a list of current names for their own use for many years. The advent of computers in the Herbarium has allowed this list to be published. A computer allows a publication to be set-up ready for printing at a relatively small cost. Additionally the list may be kept up to date very easily and we can expect a revised version to appear before this list is eighty-six years out of date!

For readers familiar with the Tasmanian flora this census may prove both interesting and frustrating. There are a great many names included which do not appear in the incomplete Tasmanian floras published in the last twenty-six years. Without a major literature search, or a patient friend in the Herbarium, it would be difficult to find further details about all of these names. Perhaps the Herbarium can be persuaded to computerise the *Tasmanian Flora*, so that regular revisions can be produced of this valuable reference work as well.

### **The Platypus: a Unique Mammal**

by *Tom Grant, illustrated by Dominic Fanning*

NSW University Press: Australian Natural History Series, rrp \$14.95

*Reviewed by D.G. Hird*

Since its discovery by Europeans, the Platypus has intrigued casual observers and scientists alike. This provocation of our curiosity has continued through the first proof of oviparity (egg laying) amongst mammals in this species through to a recent discovery of a specialised food electro-location faculty not previously known in any higher vertebrate.

As with several predecessors in its series, this volume is primarily based on an intensive long-term study of its subject by its obviously dedicated author. As such