

BOOK REVIEWS

South-West Tasmania — A Natural History*by Ken Collins*

Heritage Books, Hobart, 1990, 368pp, RRP \$39.95

Reviewed by Jamie Kirkpatrick

The preservation of the South-West has been a preoccupation of many Tasmanians and Australians for several decades. Several books have played a major part in the largely successful battles to prevent all sorts of economic despoilation of this remote and beautiful region. *The South West Book* edited by Helen Gee and Janet Fenton, *The World of Olegas Truchanas* and *Wild Rivers*, with its magnificent photographs by Peter Dombrovskis, have all influenced the public, reinforced the conservationists, and helped shift reluctant politicians. The major role of *South-West Tasmania* by Ken Collins should be to help consolidate the gains made over the last thirty years by providing a resource that makes the natural wonders of the South-West readily accessible to the moderately educated public.

Ken has produced a major review of contemporary natural historic information on the South-West, profusely illustrated with coloured photographs, maps and line drawings, and capable of being used as an excellent guidebook to the natural features and walking routes.

The first half of the book covers geology, geomorphology, prehistory, European exploration, flora, fauna and vegetation. Discussion of the biological features is divided by major vegetation types, such as buttongrass moorland and the alpine zone. Scientifically satisfying reviews are interspersed with guides to particular features, including many for which there are no other ready sources. The guides are, of necessity, incomplete, but will help the visitor identify many geomorphological, geological and archeological features, plants and animals, including spiders, snails and fungi. There are remarkably few factual mistakes, although some are surprising, such as the misidentification of *Acacia sophorae* as *Acacia mucronata* on p. 147.

The guide to routes and features for the visitor is divided up by walking routes. Each section consists of a topographic map showing the routes, thick and thin vegetation, a description of the route, and maps, words, photographs and diagrams of interesting features seen on the way. A particular pleasing emphasis in this section is on minimum impact and safe bush recreation. Unlike other authors of guides Ken Collins has taken great care to ensure that his book does not lead to the development of new tracks or routes, by covering only those

already established.

This book is without doubt the most useful single volume to carry on a walk in south-western Tasmania. It will be well worth the effort to keep its 368 A5 glossy pages separated from the elements.

*Worms to Wasps: an illustrated guide to
Australia's terrestrial invertebrates*

by Mark S. Harvey & Alan L. Yen

Oxford University Press, 1989, 201pp, RRP \$17.95

Reviewed by P.B. McQuillan

This attractive paperback is an illustrated guide to 68 orders of Australia's terrestrial invertebrates.

A simple to use dichotomous key helps the user determine the appropriate phylum or order. Jargon is kept to a minimum, but a glossary at the back of the book can be consulted as necessary. The bulk of the book then describes each order in some detail, with a brief description and notes on habitat, feeding, life history and further reading. The page opposite this text is occupied by a large scale line-drawing of a representative of the order in question. The illustrations, by Graham Milledge, are of a high standard.

To cover such a vast subject area such a book can only scratch the surface. My main criticism is that, because of the rigid format, some orders with only one species are accorded the same space as, for example, beetles with 20,000 species. Orders, such as true bugs, which have a diversity of body shape, would have been better served by a number of smaller illustrations to give a more complete representation. Also, no larval forms are illustrated, although the reader is referred to an actual size silhouette alongside each diagram.

In summary, this is a useful book which fills the need for much more accessible reference literature to our enormous invertebrate fauna.

