

BOOK REVIEW

"THE LIVERWORTS OF NEW ZEALAND," by K.W. Allison and J. Child (University of Otago Press (John MacIndoe) Dunedin, 1975. \$12.50.)

This is the first and only book dealing with liverworts in New Zealand and can be welcomed as filling one of the great gaps in our natural history publications.

Coming nearly four years after the moss book by the same authors it suffers badly from inflated costs, being twice the cost of the earlier volume, however, by way of compensation it is nearly twice as long, and the standard of the photographs is generally rather better, though some (e.g. Chrytochila jamesoniella p.99) provide nothing that would be helpful for diagnostic characters.

The book deals with some 200 species, close to half of the recognised species of New Zealand liverworts and most of the genera are covered, useful simple keys are provided but undoubtedly most users will concentrate on recognition and comparison with the drawings and photographs.

There is a useful introductory section where many of the terms peculiar to liverwort description are explained and this allied with the field recognition lists should also prove most helpful.

Unfortunately, as with the moss book, the drawings are only a very general indication of the plant form and may in some cases be quite misleading e.g. Temnoma pulchellum p.41 is illustrated as having incubous leaves distantly spaced, whereas Schuster, 1966, describes it as succubous with crowded leaves. Often in other descriptions useful cell detail is omitted, as are details of the fertile branches, sometimes in cases where there is plenty of space in the illustration gap. A few other illustrations unfortunately are quite unconvincing e.g. Monoclea p.265 and its elators, and Marchantia p.276.

Thus we have a potentially very useful book but unfortunately one where we must treat the illustrations with circumspection. The book appears sturdy but would not be suitable for field work as it is printed on glossy paper that will obviously stick very firmly once wet. The glossy surface also reflects artificial light very well and provides a distracting glare when read in it.

The bibliography wisely refers readers to the more comprehensive bibliographies of Hamlin (1972) and Scott (1971) - this is important as several major works, especially some by Schuster, have been omitted.

I was pleased to find this book and it is a helpful preliminary guide and quick reference outstandingly better than the heap of separates I normally deal with - however it is not, and makes no pretensions of being the final word on liverworts and if possible further checks should be made. Its greatest disadvantage is its price which will undoubtedly deter the casual buyer.

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