

Book review

Ferns & Allied Plants of Victoria Tasmania & South Australia.

Betty D. Duncan & Golda Isaac. August 1986

Melbourne University Press. 258 pages, Recommended
retail price \$ Aust 25.

This publication arrived after copy for Journal 20 had been sent to the Printers. It looked so interesting that John Thompson was asked if he could rush through a review and obligingly did so, however, he was impressed with the tremendous amount of fieldwork necessary to prepare the maps showing the distribution in Victoria of each fern species. The system of mapping is that used by the National Herbarium of Australia. For Victoria a system based on the 1 : 250 000 National Topographic maps is used. Each map is an area bounded by lines of latitude at 1.5^o intervals and lines of longitude at intervals of 1^o. This area is further subdivided into 54 smaller areas bounded by lines of latitude and longitude at intervals of 10min and dimensions of approximately 18 x 15km. Ed

The book describes all the ferns that are native to the areas given in the title. For each species there is: a detailed description; a list of field characters; and some general information; the countries in which they occur, including New Zealand and the state in Australia; and a map with distributions shown by dots for Victoria. There is an interesting looking tabular key that should lead one readily to the family or genus, with minor keys identifying the species.

It is exceptionally well illustrated with an abundance of photographs, including 49 coloured ones, and line drawings.

The authors provide a chapter on vegetative reproduction and much information on reproduction from spores. This chapter will be of interest to gardeners, both amateur and professional, particularly with the growing awareness of the beauty and uses of ferns as garden plants.

One small piece of information appears to be lacking, the number of species dealt with in the book. A quick count gave 127 species, this compares with the total number of New Zealand native species of 189. Of these 127 species, 70 or 55% are common to the New Zealand list given by Brownsey et al, 1985. 'A revised classification of New Zealand pteridophytes with a synonymic checklist of species' New Zealand journal of botany, 23: 431-489. This book, therefore, should be helpful in the study of New Zealand ferns.

There is the occasional divergence in the Australian and New Zealand naming of species, for instance, our Phymatosorus diversifolius and P. scandens, appears as Microsorium (sic) diversifolium an M. scandens.

This is a splendid book and should be of interest to all fern lovers. The price is very reasonable.

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September, 1896.