

name) to grow in it. We were afraid that we were tiring the old man, but had great difficulty stemming the flow of stories and opinions.

Lucy Moore died a few days later, on 9 June 1987. Mrs Michie passed away quietly in her sleep on 11 July 1987, and Ross followed her, aged 93, on 27 October of the same year.

Like Joe Rawlings (Esler 2006), Ross was a character who could fairly be described as an unstandardised man. He had strong and unconventional opinions on many subjects, and had no compunction about expressing them bluntly. He came from a generation that had not heard of Political Correctness, and tact was not an attribute that he valued. Every visitor to the workshop in his garage would have come away with a clutch of colourful quotes. His pithy description of the propensity of *Pittosporum fairchildii* to hybridise with all and sundry, does not bear repeating in this

polite publication. He spoke in scathing tones of one scientist with whom he spent time in the field. "Anyone can be cheerful at the beginning of the day, but at the end of the day, when you're worn out, that is the time that tells what kind of person you are. I can't be bothered with tantrums and sulks". I always try to keep this in mind when I'm tired at the end of a long day's botanising.

Katie Mays wrote a short obituary to Ross Michie in the Auckland Botanical Society Journal (Mays 1988), with line drawings of five different leaf forms taken from the one tree of *Pittosporum virgatum* in Ross's garden.

There are thirty-one R.H. Michie specimens in the Auckland Museum Herbarium (AK), all from the Far North. These include a suite of *Pseudopanax* hybrids, mostly collected from Ninety-Mile Beach. Ten more specimens are from Ross's garden but lodged by other people.

#### References:

- Esler, A.E. 2006: An appreciation Joe Rawlings (1906-1978). *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 61:128-129  
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<http://art-newzealand.com/Issues11to20/naive.htm>  
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Michie, R.H. 1963: A visit to the Three Kings Islands: *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* 20: 3-6.

## Book Review:

**"Wild orchids of the lower North Island" by P. de Lange, J. Rolfe, I. St George and J. Sawyer. 2007. Dept of Conservation, Wellington. 194 pp. \$19.95.**

Reviewed by Rhys Gardner

Despite the limited (though, ever increasing) number of native orchid species in this country, our enthusiasts are well served by the popular literature; a third edition of the NZ Native Orchid Group's field guide has recently been offered (St George et al., 2005) and second-hand copies of the classics (Cooper 1981; Johns & Molloy 1983; St George 1999) can still be obtained.

The small print under the present book's title suggests it too might be "just" a Field Guide, but in some respects, particularly the detail of the maps and descriptions, Flora standards are approached. Only the Manawatu Gorge to Cook Strait region is covered however, in which there are 72 species (or aggregates), that is, just 3/4 of the NZ orchid flora as currently named.

An introductory illustrated table presents eleven recognizable groups: epiphytic orchids, greenhood orchids, sun orchids, spider orchids (for the *Corybas* s.l. species, which I would have called helmet orchids), *Caladenia* orchids (none of which have been retained in this genus), etc. A second such "finder" sets out by altitude and habitat the kinds of places the species can be found in, and includes the encouraging figure of 28 for "plantation forest", very relevant to restoration

projects in the region. A third finder groups the orchids by flower colour, and a fourth (printed rather alarmingly in black, the only non-colour section in the book) sets out their flowering times.

The taxa are treated alphabetically. The lengthiness of the descriptions is partly because the generic characters have to be repeated, but also because extensive notes on colouring are given. There is a highlighted "recognition panel", sometimes lengthy too but ensuring a good filling of the page. The two or three colour photographs of each taxon are crisp and well-framed, with only a couple of exceptions (I have yet to see a really good photo of a *Spiranthes*). The principal contributing photographers, Ian St George, Jeremy Rolfe, and Eric Scanlen, and also newcomer Michael Pratt, are to be congratulated for carrying out what must have been many months of damp-fronted searching.

In the photographs, the size of the plant, inflorescence or flower has to be deduced from the text. I favour having scale objects in photos, human body (parts) in particular, but admit that a muddy hand around the base of an orchid stem is inartistic and could send the wrong message. (One of the photos here contains an "old five cent piece", not quite as convenient-sized as

the new ten cent piece, which is exactly 2 cm in diameter).

Habitat photos are rather few, perhaps because the landscape format is space-demanding, but there is a remarkable one by Jeremy Rolfe in the Introduction, which epitomizes the mythopoetic nature of the orchid-obsession. In its foreground, a newly matured *Pterostylis graminea* stands by a trackside in the Rimutakas, head bowed in contemplation of its own beauty; behind, over a rise in the middle distance, an indistinct but menacingly bent-kneed figure looms, and towards this a smaller pterostylis has turned in alarm. I am reminded of the frontispiece in Richard Mabey's "Flora Britannica", where a group of foxgloves basks in the sun, oblivious to a huge power station — though I suppose we would have to substitute dairy giants and wind-farms.

New names are uniformly preferred over traditional ones, and the latter are not cited in the heading for each taxon; one has to find them in a table in the Introduction. I'm sceptical about their value: do not the helmet orchids form a natural group (*Corybas*) and greenhoods similarly (*Pterostylis*)? Are there no such things now as subgenera and sections? Anyone who knows the diversity of *Bulbophyllum* and *Dendrobium* must seriously doubt the staying-power of our new "endemic genera" here. But I'll say no more, since the authors have pre-empted such discussion with their quote from "Orchid Fever" by Eric Hansen: "Are they going to fight? ... No, they are just discussing the name of a flower".

Each orchid has its distribution dot-mapped, from herbarium records and well-attested sightings. These

maps, coloured with altitudinal zones, are a great advance on those of previous fieldguides — although they do not contain a geographic grid or the major rivers they give a fair idea of where in a district it might be a good idea to search. But for common species, some more information might have been a boost for beginners — say, to have noted: "abundant in the roadside scrub between A and Z"; "in pine forest, gorse and heather behind X beach", etc.

The authors refer to a Herculean effort being needed to produce this book in the short time available (unhelpful DoC accountancy practices can be suspected). They have succeeded extremely well, and I hardly begrudge them the several places where they seem to have rejoiced too much in their strength: the wholesale use of the new generics, and of some uncommon common-names too, and also the promotion of *kahikatoa* over *manuka* (surely this is the hiku wagging the iwi?).

So, although one has to sigh over those things, and over the book's incomplete coverage, its price and quality make it an absolute gift to all botanically-minded taxpayers. It is rather too pretty and a bit too heavy to be taken regularly to the Tararua tops - while the oil lasts, keep a copy in the glove box of the car. One could well buy a couple and still have enough left over to buy a couple of Rangitoto books too.

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- Cooper, D. 1981: A field guide to the New Zealand native orchids. Milburn & Co., Wellington.  
Johns, J.; Molloy, B. 1983: Native Orchids of New Zealand. Reed, Wellington.  
St George, I. 1999: The nature guide to New Zealand native orchids. Random House, Auckland.  
St George, I.; Irwin, B.; Hatch, D. 2005: Field guide to the New Zealand Orchids. 3rd edn. NZ Native Orchid Group, Wellington.

#### Corrigenda

Young, M. (2007): Mt Tamahunga, 17 February 2007. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 62(1): 38-41: Pg 38, in the first sentence delete (also known as 'the Dome'). The Dome is another peak several kilometres from Tamahunga.

Lux, Jenny et al. 2007: Labour Weekend Camp 2006: Puketotara and Oneriri Peninsulas, Otamatea Ecological District, Kaipara, Auckland. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 61 (1): 57-67: Pg 58, replace Helen and Marcel Lyons with Helen Lyons and Marcel Horvath. Replace Toni and Ron Morrison with Toni and Ron Sylvester.

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