

NEWS

Botanical Artist Honoured

Congratulations to another distinguished BSO member, Audrey Eagle, who was made a well-deserved Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours list, for her services to botanical art.

Audrey has been producing colour paintings of New Zealand's native trees and shrubs for 49 years. Her first series of 228 botanical paintings were published as 'Eagle's Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand' in 1975. The second series, published in 1982, included 405 botanical paintings. The paintings are meticulous in their precise detail and accuracy, drawing on skills refined from her training and work as an electrical engineering artist. This careful attention to the reproduction of distinguishing detail, colour and life-size are key factors in making these books more useful than photographs for plant identification.

Illustrations of rare species and those of local distribution make the second series of particular significance to the professional botanist as well as the amateur. Noted botanist Tony Druce, of the Botany Division of the former DSIR, to whom this second series is dedicated, was a key figure in contributing to the taxonomic and distribution details.

Both books were awarded prizes (third in 1976 and second in 1983) in the then Watties Book of the Year Award. In 1986 'Eagle's Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand Volumes I and II', a revised edition of the 1975 and 1982 books, was published. It is one of the most-thumbed reference books in the University of Otago Botany Department library, and the most on demand on Botanical Society long summer trips.

Now Audrey is putting the finishing touches to the 160 new illustrations for what was to have been her third book. These illustrations are now going to be incorporated into two newly designed books, which will include up-dated versions of her two original books. The result will be illustrations of about 790 plants, with all species in a genus together.

Once the artwork and writing is finalised, financial assistance is needed to cover the cost of preparing 560 plates for publication. Hopefully having CNZM after her name will speed the progress of an eagerly awaited botanical companion.

The books are expected to be on sale in 2003.

Photo courtesy of the Otago Daily Times.

Audrey Eagle, CNZM

