

Book Review: *The Nature Guide to New Zealand Native Orchids.*

By Alison Knight

One of the nicest presents I got this Christmas was Ian St George's *The Nature Guide to New Zealand Native Orchids*, a Godwit book published by Random House, New Zealand in 1999. It is a slim, easy to read volume, giving descriptions of over 100 native orchids and well illustrated throughout with numerous colour photos. Clear distribution maps and a table of flowering times add to the ease of reference.

Ian St George lived in Otago until recently, so there is a special bias towards this area. His list of orchids is a personal update of the last 'official' taxonomic list in 1970 in the *Flora of New Zealand II*. Perhaps he is a little too keen on splitting hairs with new tag names. I would have trouble distinguishing the *Corybas* 'Trotters' that I saw flowering in Trotters Gorge in early October from the *C. macrathus* we found on the cliffs at Cornish Head on our December field trip. But the field is still in a state of flux. Gael Donaghy informs me that the new *Pterostylis* orchid in her photo on page 124 has now been identified as *P. alveata*.

As well as being a useful reference field guide the book is full of interesting quotes and snippets of background ecological and historical information, including a fascinating explanation by GM Thomson on why spiders frequent spider orchids so much, and a thoughtful section on mycorrhizal fungal associations.

Members can order the book at a reduced rate through the Wellington Botanical Society, via Alison Knight, for \$31 which includes post and packing. However we need to order at least 5 to receive them at that price.