

BOOKS

Book review – by John Steel

Brownsey, P.J.; Smith-Dodsworth, J.C. 2000. *New Zealand ferns and allied plants*. Revised edition. 168 pp. H/back. David Bateman. \$89.95.

This is a revised edition of the excellent, 1989 issue and brings it up to date with many of the discoveries and changes of the last twenty years. The authors were apparently under some publishing constraints which means the book is really a re-issue of the earlier edition with changes added.

There have been a few major changes in this time. The Blechnaceae and Aspleniaceae have been updated and a number of name changes implemented, especially useful for the former. Unfortunately the publishing constraints could not allow for changes in the Lycopodiaceae to be included. This is an extensive treatment, which divided the family into three genera from the previous one, renamed many of the New Zealand species and distributed them among the new genera. The new names are included as synonyms, which may give the impression that the old names still have priority. Patrick does not accept the changes in the Hymenophyllaceae and this now puts us out of step with the Australians who do (Bostock, P.D.; Spokes, T.M. 1998). A major addition, is the inclusion of ten new exotic species. The dust jacket is essentially that of the first edition (ignoring the somewhat insipid, coloured photograph on the front which replaces the much more dramatic and effective earlier one!) and continues with the claim that every one of the species is illustrated. Don't try looking for illustrations of the new exotics, however, you'll be wasting your time!

The authors persist with the use of subspecies on the basis of morphological similarity – while showing photographs and drawings highlighting their dissimilarity. I accept that my dislike of subspecies is a personal foible and this may be less of an irritation to others.

The book retains the original, effective layout, style and format. One welcome change is the replacement of the black background of the coloured photographs with a white one making them stand out more. At \$90 it is, in my opinion, a bit on the expensive side and may discourage some would be pteridologists, and even deter many from binning their old, still useful, earlier edition. It is still the only publication of its kind and good to have it back in print.

Reference. Bostock, P.D.; Spokes, T.M. 1998. Hymenophyllaceae. In *Flora of Australia. Volume 48. Ferns, gymnosperms and allied groups*. McCarthy, P.M. Ed. CSIRO, Canberra.

There is a flyer enclosed from the publishers offering \$10 off the list price. This book is also available from Manaaki Whenua Press, which offers a 20% discount to current Botanical Society members. With just one purchase you could more than recoup the cost of your Botanical Society subscription.