

REVIEWS

The Sea and the Ice — A Naturalist in Antarctica. By Louis J. Halle. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston, Massachusetts. 1973. 286 pp. US \$8.95.

Halle journeyed to the Antarctic during the 1970-71 season and was given the opportunity of seeing more of the continent than most Antarctic naturalists see in a lifetime. The result of his experiences are contained in this well-written book.

The book contains 15 chapters covering such subject matter as the Antarctic Convergence, pack ice, historic explorations, seabirds, penguins, skuas, the South Pole, whales, and seals. The epilogue which follows was printed in *Audubon* in March, 1973. Three appendices follow — the Coriolis effect, the Royal Albatrosses of Tairaroa, and international agreement on measures of conservation in the Antarctic.

Halle has written this book in non-technical language, but at the same time cites references throughout. He seems to have done a good job of reviewing the existing material before going to the Antarctic. I can find few statements with which I disagree, and most of these disagreements are of a personal nature rather than scientific. However, there are a few errors. One such statement, found on p. 135, reads "The Emperor is, I believe, the only bird in the world that . . . does not have a nesting territory that it defends." I am sure he would agree that some parasitic birds maintain no nesting territory.

These few errors aside, however, I can highly recommend this book as a well-written and tremendously interesting account of one of the most fascinating areas in the world — the Antarctic.

R. D. C.



PEDERSEN, LIS. 1974. Bibliography of Scientific Studies of Wellington Harbour: biology, geology, hydrology. *N.Z. Oceanographic Institute, Misc. Pubs.* 56: 48 pp. Obtainable from the Director, N.Z. Oceanographic Institute, P.O. Box 8009, Wellington.

Wellington Harbour has been for a long time the scene of many environmental issues ranging from extensive reclamations to the discharging of domestic and industrial wastes, in addition to the ever-present threat of oil pollution. The bird life of the harbour and its shores has been intimately involved in every one of these conflicts of land and sea use. The discharges from the now defunct plant of the Wellington Meat Export Company at Ngauranga provided a food source for many seabirds. Ornithologists travelling daily along the Hutt Road were able to glimpse Giant Petrels, Wandering Albatrosses, Fluttering, and perhaps Hutton's, Shearwaters within a stone's throw of the railway track. The estuary of the Hutt River not so long ago provided extensive muddy flats for waders; the sandy beach at Petone

and the rocky shores of the eastern bays are still good places for oystercatchers, terns and shags, and even the occasional Reef Heron. But the birdwatcher, whether he be an ardent conservationist or not, will be aware of the dwindling of suitable habitats around this fine harbour, and will be bound to ask — how long before the scene is ornithologically sterile?

Many years ago, one of our most senior members, Mr R. H. D. Stidolph, wrote a series of articles on the bird life around Wellington (*Emu* 21: 290-4, 247, 1922; 25: 204-7, 1926) and set the scene for what we have continued to observe and enjoy in the intervening years. Another of our well-known members, Mr J. M. Cunningham, a resident of the eastern bays of Wellington Harbour since 1960, has taken up cudgels on behalf of the birds of the harbour and their threatened environment, recently documenting some of his observations of 14 years residence in a Letter to the Editor of the *Hutt News* (9 July 1974: 74 "Birds of the estuary") as well as in his stimulating self-illustrated supplement to the local paper *The Eastbourne Sun* (March 1970: 3-4, "Conservation begins at home. The despoiling of our beaches") in which, amongst other things, he contrasts Charles Heaphy's account of the bird life of Wellington Harbour in 1839 ("... I well remember especially, the enormous numbers of waterfowl frequenting the shallows at the mouth of the Hutt River, cormorants, ducks, teal, oystercatchers, plovers, sand pipers, curlew and red-legged waders, were there in parties, detachments, and masses ...") with the sight to-day of oil tanks and wool stores, soap works, scrap yards and gravel dredges where only a year or so ago a few Banded Dotterels found a last resort and oystercatchers and godwit now barely find a space for themselves.

The N.Z. Oceanographic Institute has been conscious of the need to establish a base-line in terms of assembly of the published information on vulnerable or threatened parts of the New Zealand seascape. It publishes its own series of "Oceanographic Summaries" which document particular places of immediate concern and commissioned a bibliographic study of what scientific information has been published on one of the most vulnerable parts of the whole New Zealand coast, i.e. Wellington Harbour.

Miss Pedersen, at the time assistant librarian of the N.Z. Oceanographic Institute, presented this bibliography as part of the requirements for the Diploma of the N.Z. Library School. Subsequently it was amplified by additional items kindly forwarded by Professor J. T. Salmon of Victoria University and with extra help from staff of the Institute. As with every such bibliography, there are probably a number of significant references left out or incorrectly given but the scope is comprehensive and much of what is included may be new to many of us.

Birds were not included in the original draft but later combing the *Emu*, *Notornis*, and other periodicals, has yielded 21 items dealing with birds of the harbour. Accordingly, a good base on which to build up a more detailed study of the birds of this important region is now available. Both ornithologists, as such, and those wanting a source of information on the natural history of Wellington Harbour will welcome this booklet. It ought to serve as an example to others to document their own areas in a similar way. Only then can one

counter the claims of the developer and the speculator that no one cares about mudflats or knows what goes on there anyway. The developer is entitled to ask the conservationist why a particular area is worthy of consideration and the question must be answered with adequate documentation and not rely solely on emotion or airy-fairy beliefs. It is incumbent on all of us, therefore, to dig deep into our bottom drawers and publish our field notes which, often, may represent the only information available about a particular place of conflict.

E. W. D.



FORDHAM, R. A. & OGDEN, J. 1974. An Ecological Approach to New Zealand's Future. Compiled for the Council of the N.Z. Ecological Society. Supplement to its *Proceedings*, Vol. 21. Price \$1, from The Secretary, N.Z. Ecological Society, P.O. Box 1887, Wellington.

One of the most provocative, although not necessarily stimulating, statements on man's place in nature as portrayed in the New Zealand ecological scene has been forwarded to the Editor of *Notornis* for review as has been done apparently for all similar journals in the country. It would take many pages for anyone well-versed in to-day's eco-literature to do justice to what is a brave and honest attempt by two biologists, one of them even an ornithologist, to point to ways in which New Zealand could become the mistress of her own destiny. Your Editor read this in draft form when it was offered to the Royal Society of New Zealand for sponsorship and had misgivings then about whether it could be treated as anything but a personal dissertation of sometimes questionable substance revealing an apparent shallowness of background information and abundant non-sequiturs. Nevertheless, the N.Z. Ecological Society, to which many members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand belong, commissioned it and acknowledged the author's work by publishing and distributing it. One always wonders, in such cases, how much an elected Council, deputising for a Society's membership, can really demonstrate the collective opinion (if such a concept is really so) of the Society as a body.

This publication has already received a number of reviews, ranging in nature from a superficial, unappreciative of the belief that ecology begins at home, assessment by H. Daellenbach in the *New Zealand Monthly Review* of October 1974 to a devastatingly scholarly, in-depth probe by J. D. Stout taking up 8 pages of *New Zealand Soil News*, Vol. 22, No. 4 entitled "The Apocalypse of Thomas Robert Malthus." An abbreviated version of the original Supplement has been published in *New Zealand Engineering* 22 (10): 281-5, 15 October 1974, and one ought to watch for the next revealing issue of *New Zealand Soil News* in which Dr Stout's ability to select and quote may be questioned in its turn.

Although some might accuse me of picking up stray feathers, I do commend this allegedly "unscientific and unscholarly" publication with its "worthless" recommendations for critical examination by all members of the OSNZ, who, as intelligent, broad-minded naturalists, care for what the future holds for New Zealand, its natural habitats and man's place in them.

E. W. D.