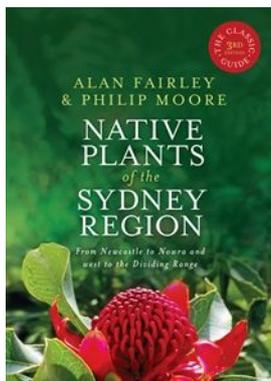


Some Recent Natural History Publications #14A
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Native Plants of the Sydney Region.

Alan Fairley and Philip Moore. Allen and Unwin. 624 pages. RRP \$60



My original copy of the first (1989) edition of this classic is much-battered, despite its plastic covering. This is because, despite it being an A4-sized hardback, I have always used it as a field guide. And although it limits itself to the area from Nowra to Newcastle, and inland to include all the Blue Mountains, I always take it to areas south of that. I missed the second edition (2002), so am even more ready than I would have been for this landmark reissue. Nor is this in any way just a reprint; it represents a total rewrite, taking into account the rapidly-changing taxonomic understandings in some groups. (What to adopt of these changes is a vexed issue for an author of any field guide of course, and must be subjective. With regard to orchids they have, somewhat courageously, opted to go for David Jones' breakup of *Caladenia*, but not *Pterostylis*. The rationale for this is not offered.) Another significant change is in the size; while it is still a decidedly chunky lump of a book, it is now A5 ie only half the dimensions, and very suitable

for a backpack. While the blurb claims 'many new photographs', some random sampling suggests that at least since 1989 they have all been replaced, and the quality is generally good. While I have long been on record as preferring well-painted illustrations for a field guide over photos, I must admit that the task of so illustrating 1400 species would be a daunting – and expensive – one. If you have an interest in plants, and spend a reasonable part of your time in the area north-east of Canberra, I think you need this book; this is certainly true if you own the first edition, but if you have the 2002 version you might like to have a look to see if you think it's worth it. My old one is about to enter a restful retirement, and its younger sibling will be getting a thorough workout, starting very soon!

Ian Fraser is a Canberra-based professional naturalist and writer (viz, he doesn't make much money!) who is the author of six – soon seven! – books on local natural history. He has run the educational Environment Tours nature-based tours program in association with the local Environment Centre since 1984 and has been the voice of natural history on local ABC radio since 1992.

The ABC recently produced a four-CD set of his 'Around the Bush Capital' series. In 2001 he won the Australian Plants Award, Australian Native Plants Association, professional category and in 2006 he was awarded the Australian Natural History Medallion. He claims no expertise and has no natural history favourites – except for birds and orchids...

This periodic review is emailed free on request, in order to help anyone interested in Australian natural history to keep up with the burgeoning literature. Previous issues available at

<http://www.botanicalbookshop.com.au/reviews.asp> for which my thanks to Tom Butts of the Botanical Bookshop.

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