
Book review

Dennis P. Gordon (Editor)

New Zealand Inventory of Biodiversity

Reviewed by Geoff Gregory

New Zealand was the first country to catalogue its entire living and fossil biodiversity, with the release from Canterbury University Press of the third and final part of *New Zealand Inventory of Biodiversity* in 2012.

The whole inventory was edited by NIWA biodiversity scientist Dr Dennis Gordon, and was the culmination of an international effort he led involving 237 other authors from New Zealand and overseas. It offers the first review of New Zealand's entire complement of known species of animals, plants, fungi and micro-organisms – some 56,000-plus living and 14,000-plus fossil species – and covers all life in all environments, from the Cambrian to the present day, including both native and naturalised alien species.

The three volumes were associated with Species 2000, an international scientific project which aimed to record all named species on Earth in one online list called the *Catalogue of Life*. The New Zealand component was launched in February 2000 at the *Species 2000: New Zealand* millennial symposium in Wellington.

At its completion, Dr Gordon said, 'I didn't anticipate that this project would take so long, but it should not be surprising that a 1758-page review and inventory of all of life through all of time in New Zealand, involving specialists in 19 countries, has taken a decade to come to completion.'

Volume 1 catalogues the branches of the animal kingdom that include living and fossil sponges and corals, worms and shellfish and their relatives, and vertebrates – the fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

Volume 2 mostly deals with the major branch of the animal kingdom known as *Ecdysozoa* (moulting animals), which includes spiders, centipedes and millipedes, crustaceans, insects and related marine worms.

Volume 3 deals with the remaining groups of life – bacteria, protozoans, algae, plants and fungi.

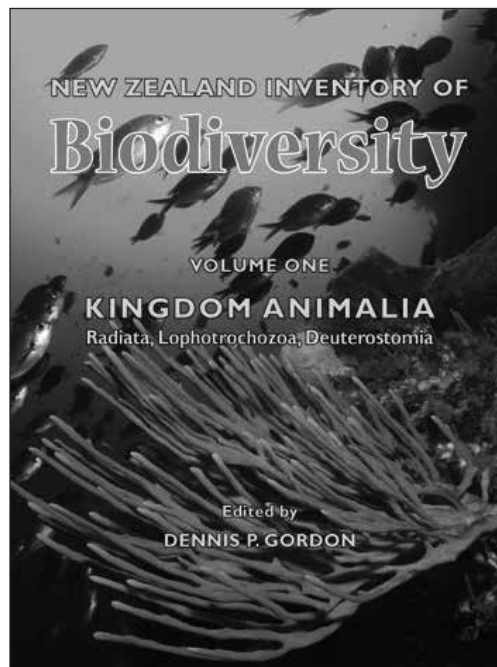
Dr Gordon himself was lead author of the chapter in Volume 1 dealing with his own speciality, the Bryozoa, and he has also written chapters on several of the lesser-known small creatures in this volume and among the Protozoa in Volume 3 to ensure that the books provide comprehensive coverage of all life forms. He was justifiably proud of Volume 3, which dealt with a lot of challenging microscopic groups that had never been scoped or reviewed before for this part of the world.

Each of the three case-bound volumes is beautifully illustrated, with appropriate line drawings, half-tones and colour photographs.

The three books can be purchased as a boxed set from Canterbury University Press: Gordon, D.P. (Ed.) 2009–2012. *New Zealand Inventory of Biodiversity* (boxed set containing three volumes). Canterbury University Press, Christchurch.

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Volume 1 of *New Zealand Inventory of Biodiversity*.