



Kimberley Society

Book Note

***The Kimberley: Australia's Last Great Wilderness* by Victoria Laurie. UWA Publishing, Crawley (WA), 2010, hard cover, 270 pages, illustrated, ISBN 9781921401329, RRP \$59.95.**

The opening sentences in this book's acknowledgements sum up its essence. The author writes: "As a working journalist, I am equipped only with an inquiring mind, interviewing skills and a keen personal interest in the natural world. I am therefore indebted to those people whose combined knowledge of the Kimberley would fill many tomes, and who agreed to help an enthusiastic non-expert write for a general readership." Special mention is made of five Kimberley Society members who helped: Pat Lowe, Kevin Kenneally, Tim Willing and Kevin & Yvonne Coate. Other members who are quoted in the book include Marion Blackwell, Chris Kloss, David Pearson, Phillip Playford, and Sandy Toussaint. Also familiar are the names of past speakers such as Richard Costin & Annabelle Sandes, Ric How, Ron Johnstone, and Di Jones. Add to that list other prominent indigenous people, scientists, and researchers, as well as some of Australia's best landscape and natural history photographers, and you start to get an idea of the book's breadth.

A skilled journalist often brings to non-fiction a flow that few other authors are able to achieve. That is definitely the case here, where Victoria Laurie weaves anecdotes, facts, quotes, and personal observations into a seamless narrative. It is easy to imagine visitors to the Kimberley devouring her chapters as they move through the region, relishing the knowledge they gain and regretting the gaps in their itineraries.

The nine chapters written to celebrate the diversity of the Kimberley are: 'Broome & the Dampier Peninsula'; 'Fitzroy River, Windjana & Geikie Gorge'; 'King Leopold Ranges, Durack Range & Mornington'; 'Mitchell Plateau & Prince Regent River'; 'Kalumburu, Drysdale River & Wyndham'; 'Kununurra, Lake Argyle & Purnululu'; 'Halls Creek, Wolfe Creek & Lake Gregory'; 'The Islands & Offshore'; and 'The Reefs & Ocean'. The final chapter is 'Science & Wisdom: The Future of the Kimberley'.

Every chapter has magnificent photographs. It hardly seems fair to single out any but those that particularly appealed to me included Gunther Schmida's Freshwater Whipray, Rod Hartvigsen's Ta-ta Lizard or Gilbert's Dragon, and Clay Bryce's underwater shots, one of which shows the Christmas Tree Worm. Double-page spreads do justice to both landscapes and wildlife, with the former including David Bettini's waterlily garden at Marlgu Billabong and his dry spinifex plains near Halls Creek.

Cathie Clement