

Wilderness Magazine - January 2012 issue

'Wild Read'

Visions of Nature, New Zealand's Wild in the West

By Trevor Penfold

Perfect Planet Publishing

\$58

If you had asked me whether a fine photographic book on the wilds of Raglan Harbour was possible, I'd have told you a flat 'No'. Raglan-based Trevor Penfold has not only produced a striking book, but opened my eyes to the biological diversity of an area that I used to frequent, but did not fully appreciate.

In *Visions of Nature*, Penfold presents exquisite portraits of the area's wildlife: mainly estuarine birds (spoonbills, herons, godwits, stilts, shags, terns, and gulls), but also bush birds, marine mammals, frogs, skinks, and many insects.

Anyone who had photographed birds (or insects) will understand what patience and skill it takes to pull off even a simple, sharp portrait. Penfold has found a kayak makes for an unobtrusive way to approach birds, and the resulting images are superbly crisp, perfectly exposed, and richly textured. His talent perhaps places him in the same league as Geoff Moon – although Moon never had the advantages afforded by digital photography. It's as much a book about avian behaviour as it is about photography: images show birds feeding, swimming, flying and even duelling. My favourite shows two silvereye chicks sheltering under a fern frond.

The landscape images are less accomplished, and I still have trouble with the artificial look of 'High Dynamic Range' used to too greater an effect. But there are some pleasing landscapes, notably one of Mt Karioi – not an easy mountain to photograph successfully.

Altogether this hardback book combines fine photography, natural history writing and photographic tips in a volume well priced at \$58. In Penfold's words, the book uses photography to 'highlight nature and especially the animals within it...[to remind] people that life is not just about us.'

By *Shaun Barnett*

