

Ramsay, G. W. 1990: *Mantodea (Insecta), With a Review of Functional Aspects of Morphology and Biology*. DSIR Publishing, Wellington. **Fauna of New Zealand No. 19*. 96 pp.

Praying mantids are fascinating to humans, without a doubt. New Zealand only has 2 species established, so one might reasonably ask whether we need a whole volume of the *Fauna of New Zealand* dedicated to this pair of species. After reading Graeme Ramsay's contribution, I have no difficulty in saying that this latest addition to the Fauna is not only justified, but an excellent summary of the functional morphology and biology of

a group of insects with wide popular appeal. The long list of acknowledgements is testament to the keen interest of a wide range of people, as much as to the task of producing a volume up to the high standards of the series. I found the volume to be very readable, with a good level of technical detail, and an extensive worldwide literature review. Such comparisons help to put the New Zealand species in perspective on a range of attributes, and make this work a useful contribution to the available information on mantids.

The artwork is of a high standard, and the electron micrographs are excellent. I particularly liked the series "Features of a Femoral Brush", which are used by mantids to clean the eyes and head after a meal ("... in the best feline manner", according to one author). Details on the functional morphology and biology cover a wide range of topics, under 12 sub-headings which summarise the major aspects of interest in useful but not excessive detail. Anecdotal reports are used for the local species, and are appropriate for a volume on this subject. The critical review of mantid taxonomy is well presented and outlines the revision of *Orthodera minstralis* to *O. novaezealandiae* for the New Zealand species, as distinct from the Australian one, which remains the same. I have no hesitation in recommending this latest volume in the *Fauna* series, to both professional and amateur entomologist alike.

D. M. Suckling
DSIR Plant Protection,
Lincoln Research Centre, Private Bag, Christchurch, New Zealand

* Note: Orders for 'Fauna' issues should now be addressed to: DSIR Library, Mt Albert Research Centre, Private Bag, Auckland.