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A New Zealand Nature Journal by Sandra Morris

Publisher: Walker Books

RRP \$22.99

An attractive cover highlights the soft shades of nature and hints at the pleasures this book holds. The colourful contents page with different letterings lists a wide range of environments to explore. The topics are linked together with the theme of outdoor walks; a walk in the garden, a walk at the beach, a walk at the zoo, a walk in the wetlands, a walk in the countryside, and so on.

Walkers are encouraged to look closely at what they find and to keep a nature journal. For example; have you ever noticed that ladybirds have different numbers of spots? Or that leaves can be pointed or round, long or short, soft or hard? Numerous ideas and illustrations suggest what to record; such as a log of changing cloud patterns, a log of the moon during a lunar month, or sketches of the metamorphosis of monarch butterflies or frogs.

The guidelines of what to take when going outdoors is a helpful reminder; binoculars, tape measure, specimen jars, and some sketching materials. Various techniques give ideas on how to journal, and a useful colour wheel displays the colours of the changing seasons.

Each double-page spread explores different aspects of a particular environment. A walk in a city street encourages people to notice insects and plants in the cracks of the footpath, to look under bushes and up into the trees. Observe what is there in the daytime, then revisit the location in the evening and notice the different sights and sounds.

Intricate sketches accompany each topic to help readers spot the creatures in a specific area. For instance, mudbanks and shellbanks show the resident birds and their behaviours to look out for, while rock pools are likened to an underwater city teeming with life under the surface. A walk in the zoo shows how to make a trail map, draw the various animals and record their unique features.

A well-produced book packed with ideas and examples of the beauty to be found in New Zealand's outdoors and how to record the discoveries. Inspirational!

Reviewed by children's book author, Jean Bennett

Author/Illustrator's website:

www.illustration.co.nz/morris.html

