

## Kosciusko's fascinating flora

During summer, a magnificent wildflower display begins above the tree-line in the Mt Kosciusko area. The slopes, snow-covered for much of the year, become carpets of yellows, mauves, reds, and white blended into a green-brown background.

Despite the harsh climate, more than 200 plant species, subspecies, and varieties grow in this scenic and scientifically interesting alpine area. Many of the plant communities are fragile, and have suffered severely in the past from cattle and sheep grazing and burning by stockmen. With grazing now banned, the alpine flora should be safe; the increasing number of visitors to the area probably poses the main continuing danger.

Four men who have spent many years studying the flora have now produced a comprehensive and profusely illustrated book on the subject. They are Dr Alec Costin and Mr Dane Wimbush, who provided most of the ecological

information, Mr Max Gray, who provided taxonomic descriptions of the plants, and Mr Colin Totterdell, who took most of the photographs and contributed taxonomic and ecological data. All are members or former members of the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry.

The book reflects their aim of presenting the beauty of the



flora as well as the science. 'In sharing the results of our enthusiasm and experience with others', they write, 'we trust that they, too, will learn to understand and appreciate this unique and wonderful flora and, in doing so, become committed to conserving it.'

The book contains an introductory section on the

general features of the area and its geologic and climatic history, with special reference to the flora. This is followed by sections on human history and use and the general characteristics of the alpine flora, its probable origin, and its relation to other alpine floras.

Descriptions and colour photographs of each main plant community aim at assisting readers to understand the ecological relations of species and to locate them in the field. Each species is described, with reference to colour plates, and keys are provided to aid identification.

Large-scale colour maps of the Kosciusko area show the distribution of the main vegetation communities and features such as lakes, cliffs, screes, tracks, and eroded areas. A glossary, index, and extensive bibliography are included.

Titled 'Kosciusko Alpine Flora', the book is published jointly by CSIRO and William Collins Pty Ltd, and is available from bookshops. The recommended price is \$25.