

The ages of these two children fits the age range to whom this book may appeal. Michelle and Clive's language would be seen by many as typical for their age group. For example, when Clive is standing on the beach ready to go into the water he says, 'Global warming this, global warming that! What are the Greenies so overheated about? What's wrong with more sunshine?' (p.36) and Michelle on page 21 says, 'But recycling's such a hassle. You have to keep everything separate.'



Undoubtedly the comic book style will be attractive to lots of children but I am not confident that many will persevere with the reading. If children pick up the book for an easy read, they will be disappointed when they find that it isn't fiction. If they are looking for information for a project it is certainly there, but has to be searched for.

The final page of this book, with the heading **Over to you Earthlings ...** suggests ways we can save energy, travel green, reduce, repair, reuse, recycle, campaign for animal rights, etc. There is also a list of names and addresses of organisations throughout Australia and New Zealand which, if children send a large stamped self-addressed envelope, will supply them with further information.

Having read this book with its strong message on why we need to take action to save planet Earth, I was pleased to note that the book is printed on recycled paper!

*Catch me if you can
Cicada Sing-Song
Plants of Prey*
(from *Small World Series*)

by Densley Clyne
Little Ark Books, Nth Sydney, 1992. 33
pp. each. \$8.95 each.
Reviewer: Jill Duncan

The text and photography of these three books by Densley Clyne are alive with her usual delight and enthusiasm for the natural world. Her curiosity and excitement for the small, often overlooked and sometimes reviled creatures and plants are infectious to adult and child reader alike. This is in itself sufficient cause to recommend these books for educational purposes in schools and early childhood centres. They are also eminently suitable for the family collection.

As the titles suggest, each book takes a particular issue to explore. *Catch me if you can* considers the various cunning ways that insects protect themselves from likely predators.

Cicada Sing-Song extends the readers knowledge of the details of the species and life-cycle of those insects, while *Plants of prey* exposes the complexities and intricacies of insectivorous plants like sundews and pitcher plants.

The books (roughly 25cm x 18cm) are designed for young children, with a little over half of each volume dedicated to the author's photographs accompanied by smaller blocks of text. Younger children will need an adult to read the text, while the older ones would possibly require occasional assistance because, significantly, Densley Clyne is not tempted in her 'small world' series in 'little ark books', to belittle either the knowledge she is imparting, nor her young audience by talking down to them.

The language she offers ranges from the scientific:

'The cicada's tymbals lie on either side, above the tympani, and are hidden away under the rigid flaps, called tymbal covers' (*Cicada Sing-Song*, page 15);

to the instructional:

'If you're confused by these names, here's a good way to remember which is which: 'tympanum' rhymes with 'eardrum', and that's the part that **hears** the noise; 'tymbal' rhymes with 'cymbal', and that's the part that **makes** the noise (*Cicada Sing-Song*, page 15);

to the poetic:

'It's at this moment in the life of a greengrocer (cicada) that the wings look most brilliant – sapphire blue with a tracery of emerald green veins, and textured like ripple-glass' (*Cicada Sing-Song*, page 24).

Densley Clyne's writing and photography give due credit to the small things of the natural world as well as to the budding naturalists which young children are. Both as a parent and teacher of the very young, I have been concerned about how to encourage children's exploration of their natural environment without the creepy crawlies coming off second-best. Other adults familiar with this dilemma will be relieved and reassured by Densley Clyne's books for children. With her as an example, 'nature' in the hands of scientists (child or adult) may be respected and admired for its cleverness. Densley Clyne implicitly promotes an attitude of 'look' and 'touch' carefully. In fact, only one photo in one of the three books shows human handling, which suggests that touching these small creatures – plants and insects, is largely unnecessary, even for those who wish to know plants and animals well.

Densley Clyne sets out to make some of the less attractive and/or less well-known inhabitants of the environment fascinating and valuable in their own right, but as well, in her capacity as naturalist, she informs her readers, young and old. Those who are familiar with her books for adults and her television broadcasting will recognise the richness of her language, spiked with the occasional flash of gentle humour, and the colour and clarity of her photography. Both are highly successful in inspiring the naturalist within each of us.