

# Ravaged Beauty

## An environmental history of the Manawatu

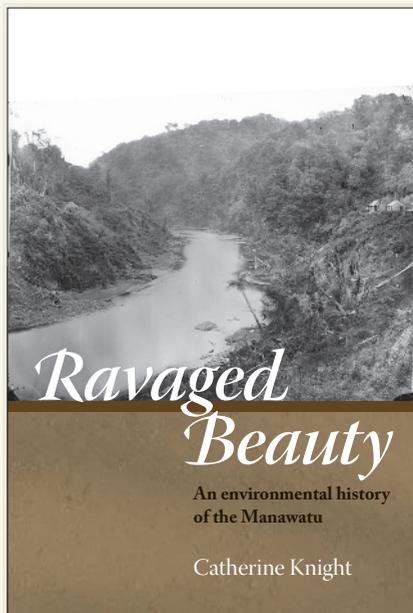
Only a century and a half ago, the Manawatu was a heavily forested hinterland: the floodplains were a sea of swamps and lagoons, teeming with birdlife, eels and other fish; the hills and terraces were covered with thick impenetrable forest, refuge perhaps to a few lingering moa. But within a few decades, the forest had been reduced to ashes, and the swamps and lagoons were being drained away. Progress marched across the landscape in the form of farms and settlements.

But it wasn't long before nature "exacted its revenge": erosion scarred the hillsides, floods ravaged farms and towns. Pollution of the rivers saw fish dying en masse. How would the people of the region meet these environmental challenges, and what lessons would there be for the future? By "peeling away the layers", this book tells the intriguing story of the Manawatu's environmental history, drawn from a rich array of sources, maps and historical images.



Catherine Knight has written extensively on the environment and its history. She has written three books since *Ravaged Beauty: An environmental history of the Manawatu* was first published in 2014. *New Zealand's Rivers: An environmental history* (Canterbury University Press, 2016) was long-listed for the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, short-listed for the New Zealand Heritage Book Awards and selected as one of the Listener's Best Books for 2016. *Beyond Manapouri: 50 years of environmental politics in New Zealand* (Canterbury University Press) and *Wildbore: A photographic legacy* (Totara Press) were both published in 2018. Catherine is a policy and communications consultant and lives with her family on a farmlet in the Manawatu.

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Winner of Palmerston North Heritage Trust's award for the best work of history relating to the Manawatu for 2013-14.



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