

community, the Blessed Sisters. The chosen girls are well-treated and raised in the faith but as Maryam approaches womanhood, she senses something more unsettling and secret about life on Onewere.

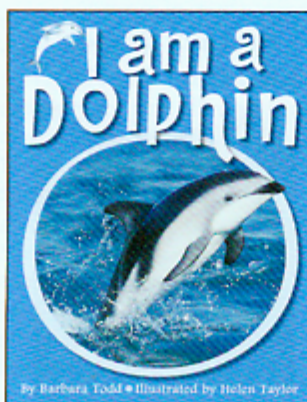
The people of Onewere—based on Kiribati—may have a hard life but they have survived a holocaust where flying machines fell from the sky, buildings toppled and boats were sunk...both sea and soil blighted. London and Venice no longer exist but, thanks to the Apostles, life on the island can continue, provided, of course, that the Apostles' needs are met.

Once she has had her period, Maryam is required to make the Crossing, walking over a long causeway to the Lord's sacred home, the Holy City, where she will serve the Apostles. Since the Holy City, also known as The Star of the Sea, is a metal structure ten times the height of the palm trees, readers will quickly work out its significance and why the Apostles are all white-skinned.

Mandy Hager has created a plausible and detailed community in the Holy City, headed by the sinister Father Joshua and his hard-eyed son, Lazarus. There are complex relationships among the teeming characters, so it is only gradually that Maryam discovers the truly horrifying fate of those who serve the Apostles. After a failed attempt to warn the villagers Maryam is returned to the Holy City by her father and forced to seek her own salvation. The scene is set for the rest of the trilogy.

**The Crossing** works on many levels. An exciting adventure story in its own right, it is also a post-holocaust science fiction novel, offering a Pacific Island parallel to such post-apocalyptic stories as Bernard Beckett's *Genesis*, Jack Lasenby's *Travellers* series and Fleur Beale's *Juno of Paris*. With its theme of blood, it is a grim tale.

It is a cleverly-constructed dystopia where no fact can be taken as given. Margaret Mahy has rightly called *The Crossing* like *1984* for teenagers. Older teenagers should find it fresh and fascinating. Girls will enjoy the strength and perseverance of Maryam and Ruth. I only hope that boys can overcome their traditional reluctance to read about female characters. Intelligent readers will be rewarded as they examine parallels with modern cults, the fate of the Bounty mutineers on Pitcairn, or even the effects of the tourist industry on native communities.  
Trevor Agnew, Christchurch



**I am a Dolphin** (2009)

Barbara Todd, ill. Helen Taylor, New Holland, 978 1 86966 264 6 \$14.99 Pb

This rhyming text explains to young children the characteristics of dolphin species, ranging from the rare Hector's dolphin to the misleadingly named Killer Whale, or Orca dolphin. The right amount of information is contained in the verses so that they successfully inform without being overloaded with detail. The words are supported by photographs and by Helen Taylor's illustrations which, while bordering on the anthropomorphic, manage to convey an adequate amount of realism. Not all the verses scan well, which suggests that plain prose may perhaps have been a more flexible way of delivering the information, especially as the need for a suitable rhyme sometimes dictates the content. It is not always clear why some pages have only photos and others only drawings. It's unclear, too, why facing-pages 22 and 23 contain more or less the same information, differing only in their choice of illustrative media. No index, but a double page spread of additional information called *Did you know?*, which is aimed at an older audience, and a page of activities for teachers and parents to try with children. This is a companion volume to *I Am a Penguin* and, despite its limitations, worth a look.

Bill Nagelkerke, Christchurch

**E3 Call Home, A True Story of Godwit Migration and Misadventure** (2009)

Janet Hunt, Random House, 978 1 86979 276 3 \$24.99 Pb

Sandra Morris first introduced young readers to the remarkable migration of godwits from the shores of New Zealand to the tundra of Alaska in her painterly *Godwit's Journey* (2004). Janet Hunt expands on this earlier story, recording the movements of two of these resolute birds in *E3 Call*



*Home*, using data from a research project partnership between the United States Geological Survey, the Point Reyes Bird Observatory Conservation Science and scientists from Massey University after concerns about the transmission of viruses by wild birds following the 2004 outbreak of bird 'flu.

In this unique study, 16 godwits were fitted with transmitters prior to their 2007 migratory flights. Janet has selected two, E7 a female whose satellite-tracked, return journey confirmed the amazing ability of these small birds and became the subject of international media attention, and E3, a male, whose briefly tracked movements mystified the scientists. The story of these birds is attractively presented with coloured photographs of the birds and their environments and clear diagrams of their flight paths. On most double-spreads a bottom frame contains additional tidbits of facts about birdlife at the Miranda Shorebird Centre and more detailed information about the godwits and their journey. This very appealing presentation also includes websites for interested readers to research additional material on migratory birds and will hopefully lead many youngsters to discover the remarkable work of the Miranda Centre. Warmly recommended for both home and library collections.  
Ellen Carter, Auckland

**Eco-Rangers Save the Planet: Earth-friendly Missions for Green Kiwis** (2009)

Maria Gill, ill. Vivienne Lingard, New Holland, 978 1 86966 258 5 \$19.99 Pb

*Eco-Rangers* adopts a personal tone, speaking directly to the readers as if they are already part of a group of young people taking charge of their future and acting with environmental conscience. Via three main sections, *Act Local*, *Think Global* and *Be the Change*, readers are informed about the current



environmental issues facing us today and what can be done about it through a series of 'missions'—save energy, create zero waste and climate change, for example. Each mission also has a *Brain-train the olds* section where young readers are, in the main, provided with very simple suggestions for getting their parents on board—growing a vegetable garden, purchasing energy saving light bulbs and drying clothes outside are doable, but the suggestion for making energy at home from solar energy or wind power is going to be unmanageable for nearly everyone. But this is a minor quibble and it is important that youngsters are aware that there is an alternative to being connected to the grid.

*Think Global* also includes brief information about some of the big issues that don't immediately appear to have an environmental connection—over-population, war, disease & poverty, for example. Every mission also provides information about Eco Heroes—people around the world who have made a difference in some way. Many of these are children, and there are several New Zealand examples, including schools.

And for those of you who don't believe in the global warming crises being caused by humans, this issue is presented in a very informative yet neutral way, allowing the reader to make up their own mind as to which side of the debate they stand on.

*Eco-Rangers* is a terrific example of non-fiction. It provides clear, accessible information and is well referenced—vocabulary included in the glossary appears throughout the book in bold type. It also encourages the reader to think beyond the pages of text providing practical activities and associated web site addresses for further study.

Highly recommended for individuals interested in enviro issues and for teachers planning an environmental studies unit—it's a great place to start.

Julie Harper, Paparua