



Scattered islands of Dugong and Talbot bays.

Writer pays tribute to Kimberley's treasures

FOR freelance journalist Victoria Laurie, the Kimberley represents a wealth of hidden treasures still waiting to be discovered.

Her stunning new hard-cover book, *The Kimberley: Australia's Last Great Wilderness*, takes readers on a visual journey from the mudflats of Roebuck Bay all the way to Kalumburu and back again.

With more than 200 full-colour photographs, it explores the flora and fauna around the majestic King Leopold range, Devonian Reef and Mitchell Plateau.

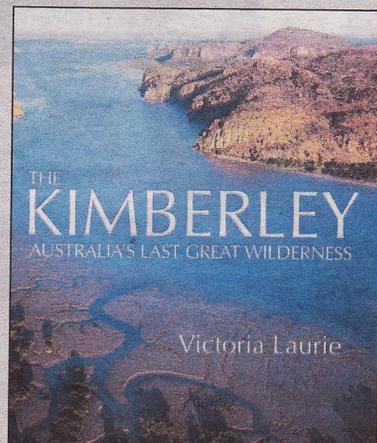
It also takes in Wyndham and Kununurra, Purnululu, Halls Creek, and the desert region and islands, examining the discovery of new species, resurgence of life in once fire-ravaged places, and the effect of humans on the landscapes.

"I was asked by UWA Press to write a Kimberley book and I said I would if I could concentrate on the things I felt were most important ... the flora and fauna and the incredible biodiversity of the place," Laurie said.

On her research trips to the Kimberley between April and December last year, she was struck by the "incredible richness" of the region.

Down in Perth, she also interviewed any expert she could find studying "any little furry or flowering thing in the Kimberley".

"We have just been discovering new things on 22 islands in the Kimberley and it's significant," she said. "There are species like quolls and rough scale pythons,



The cover of Victoria Laurie's new book on the Kimberley.

one of the rarest snakes in the world.

"Those discoveries are important because it means there are many refuges — more than we thought — for these creatures in places where cane toads can't get them."

Early research has suggested that the fringing coral reef along the Kimberley coastline could turn out to be more extensive than the red sea corals which are of global significance, she said.

"Any marine scientist will tell you that we don't know a lot about the Kimberley coast — we haven't even mapped it comprehensively — and that is sort of emblematic of the Kimberley in total," Laurie said.

The book, available already in bookshops, will be officially launched at the WA Museum by chief scientist Professor Lyn Beazley at 6pm on October 21.