

## **Further praise for *Ecotherapy: A Field Guide***

This book provides a refreshingly critical view of ecotherapy, seeking to make better sense of this emerging field at a pivotal time in its development. I also love the way it attempts to bridge western and indigenous ways of thinking about nature, which is essential to the healing that industrial growth culture so desperately needs.

**Mary-Jayne Rust, art therapist, Jungian analyst and ecopsychologist, and author of *Towards an Ecopsychotherapy***

This excellent book by Dave Key and Keith Tudor is as refreshing as it is academically rigorous, documenting some of the entangled epistemological issues within ecotherapy literature alongside contemporary accounts of the ancient hermeneutic practice of deep listening to land. It is an important contribution to the emerging dialogue between deep ecology and indigenous relationships with nature.

**Roger Duncan MSc, UKCP, systemic, family and ecopsychologist, systemic supervisor and author of *Nature in Mind: Systemic Thinking and Imagination in Ecopsychology and Mental Health***

Forget everything you have ever heard about eco-psychological therapy. This book deftly explores the cultural issues that plague modern ecotherapy, combining old ways of knowing with new ways of practice. This book takes you on a literary journey into meta-theory and the cultural complexities of modern ecotherapy practice, and grapples successfully with issues of cultural appropriation in ecopsychology and therapy. A must read for those struggling with whakapapa, belonging and cultural relevance. This book invites a deeper communion about the nomenclature and reframing of modern ecotherapy. Key and Tudor superbly illustrate the inner whakapapa that exists within culture and ecotherapy. A field guide to belonging, nature, and intimate human relations.

**John Perrott (Te Arawa/Pākehā), Associate Head of School, Māori Enhancement, School of Environmental Science, Auckland University of Technology**

This timely and exciting book provides an excellent overview and analysis of the field of ecotherapy, comprehensively outlining the territory of diverse contexts, terminology and practices and bringing much-needed cohesion and clarification. With a helpful metatheory which incorporates the different paradigms involved, the authors propose an elegant inclusive way of understanding thorny, ongoing issues and debates. Most pertinently, this thoughtful guide skilfully embodies the principles and paradigm it is espousing, including indigenous voices and poetic expressions that sing to our soul and convey the felt sense and spirit of our connectedness and belonging with “the wild earth that holds and heals us all”. Dave Key and Keith Tudor offer a welcome and important contribution to this emergent field so significant for our troubled times.

**Tania Dolley, counselling psychologist and ecopsychologist**

Accurate, accessible and understands both the subtleties and the gravity of the issues that the ecotherapy world is wrestling with. It offers clarity in a field that can be confusing. I will reference this book in my teaching workshops.

**Matthew Henson MSc, UKCP, ICB, existential psychotherapist, ecotherapist, trainer and group facilitator in private practice**

# Ecotherapy

A Field Guide

David Key and Keith Tudor



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# About the authors

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**Keith Tudor** is professor of psychotherapy at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), where he is also a co-lead of the AUT Group for Research in the Psychological Therapies. A qualified social worker and psychotherapist, he is interested in the social and political context of and on therapeutic practice as well as the impact of therapeutic theory on thinking about the social, political and ecological context. From 2012 to 2022, he was the editor of *Psychotherapy and Politics International* (Wiley/Tuwhera), is the editor of the 'Advancing Theory in Therapy' book series (Routledge) and is the co-author, with Bernie Neville, of *Eco-centred Therapy: Revisioning the Person-centred Approach for a Living World* (Routledge, 2023).

# About the contributors

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**Rupert Hutchinson** is an international mountain leader, outdoor guide, facilitator and coach based within the Findhorn watershed of north-east Scotland. Together with his partner, he runs an experienced sustainability consultancy which is a certified B Corp, working with purpose-driven leaders, often outdoors, to catalyse shifts in policy and practice towards a more regenerative future. He loves to hike, ski, cook over campfires and sleep out under the night sky.

**Hayley Marshall**, MSc, CTA, PTSTA(P), is a UK-based clinical specialist in ecological therapy, having worked outside for over fifteen years. She has written articles and book chapters on outdoor practice. In collaboration with educator Giles Barrow, she has been at the forefront of the recent development of ecological transactional analysis. Hayley is the ecological training consultant for Red Kite Training in Liverpool, UK, and offers a variety of outdoor training courses at The Centre for Natural Reflection.

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**Gina Mārie O'Neill** is of Ngāti Kahungunu, Rangitane (Aotearoa), Irish and German descent, currently living and working on unceded Gadigal and Bundjalung lands in Australia. She is a registered clinical psychotherapist, Indigenous healing practitioner, educator

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**Bianca Stawiarski** operates Indigenous social enterprise Warida Wholistic Wellness, and is an allied health professional specializing in decolonizing mental health on Country, particularly in the area of complex, developmental trauma and culturally informed, trauma – integrated system change approaches. She is a strong Badimaya and Ukrainian woman, who is a centred and purpose-driven healer, consultant, coach, speaker, lecturer, international co-author, trainer and change-maker. As part of her life's work, she is exploring ngardi guwanda, Indigenous healing and lived experiences of dissociative identity disorder.

# Acknowledgements

Dave would like to thank Tania Dolley, Hilary Prentice, Brendon Hill and Mary-Jayne Rust for their seminal roles in putting ecopsychology on the map in the UK in the 1990s. He would especially like to thank Mary-Jayne for her professional collaboration and beautiful friendship, which have formed a solid foundation and inspiration for his practice since the mid-2000s. Dave would also like to thank his partner Libby Prenton and his daughter Maia Rose, for supporting his unusual vocation, which has often taken him away from home and which has mostly been a labour of love. Finally, he would like to thank Pam Key, his Mum, for a thousand walks along the edges. Keith would like to acknowledge his parents, Joan Philipson Tudor and Leslie Charles Tudor, for instilling in him a love of mountains and fell walking, specifically in the English Lake District; Hayley Marshall for introducing him to outdoor therapy, and Hayley and Giles Barrow for their work in developing a sensibility in transactional analysis (TA) to EcoTA; tangata whenua (people of the land) here in Aotearoa New Zealand for being precisely people of land and for the teaching and learning that offers; Bernie Neville who, in 2020, joined the family of things; and Esther Tudor for her love of Stella, her canine companion, and for her advocacy of human–canine relationships which he continues to find challenging. Finally, each of us would like to acknowledge our friendship, which has developed, not least through

the writing of this book; and both of us would like to thank Angie Strachan for her editorial skills and input; Jane Ryan at Confer, and Christina Wipf Perry, Eva Townsend Bilton and Liz Wilson at Karnac Books; Kate Pearce at Phoenix Publishing House; and, of course, the wild earth that holds and heals us all.

# Introduction

This book presents the results of an extensive scoping review of the field of ecotherapy, using a methodology informed by critical theory and deep ecology. Consistent with this, and the fact that our own critical thinking has been informed by contact with Indigenous peoples, especially in our adopted homeland of Aotearoa New Zealand, the results are presented in a way that privileges traditions that predate the modern interest in this subject.

Following a review of the literature, the discussion explores six paired terms derived from a critical analysis of the findings: human and nature; therapy and therapeutic; wilderness and wild; physical and metaphysical; culture and indigeneity; and the 'skin-bound self' and the 'ecological Self'. This exploration unearths many ambiguities in the way ecotherapy is understood and described, which leads to a proposed metatheory for ecotherapy practice that aims to bring some cohesion to the field and support its future development. The conclusion argues that great care should be taken by ecotherapists in how they practise and describe their work, as many of the terms currently being used are culturally inappropriate and therapeutically counterproductive.

The process that led to this book began when the authors came together in 2019 to explore ecopsychology and its practice through ecotherapy and,

specifically, how this might impact education/training in psychotherapy. This exploration quickly exposed many limitations within the narrative of these new disciplines, caused primarily by language, but also by a lack of professional cohesion. We discussed ambiguities in concepts such as self, nature, therapy and (psycho)therapist. Issues of otherness, colonization and hegemony also surfaced as two middle-aged, white, well-educated, male émigrés, living in a land with its own Indigenous population and strong cultural identity, wrestled with shame and guilt as well as anger and a heartfelt desire for social justice and change.

After more than a year of dialogue, Keith brought together a small research group at Auckland University of Technology to try and bring some of these narratives together more formally. This group ebbed and flowed until the question at the core of this book, 'How can we make sense of the field of ecotherapy?', finally became clear. We would like to thank the members of that group – Elizabeth Day, Emma Green, Margot Solomon, Alison Strasser and Kerry Thomas-Anttila – for those early discussions and for their initial input into the research (which forms Chapter 2), albeit that we take responsibility for moving the project to completion and for the final content. We would also like to thank Ben Classen for his initial work as a research associate on the project and, therefore, his contribution to Chapter 2. As we wrote and developed the ideas that you read in the book, we wanted to find a way of including others, and so decided to invite some colleagues to read the manuscript and offer their responses to it. The result, together with our reflections on their responses, forms Chapter 5, and we are delighted to thank Dion Enari, Rebecca Freeth, Rupert Hutchinson, Hayley Marshall, Jacoba Matapo, Gina O'Neill and Bianca Stawiarski for their thoughtful and stimulating contributions.

## NOTE TO THE READER

The front cover of this book is a picture of a section of the Whanganui River in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2017, this river was given the same legal rights under New Zealand law as human beings. This is the second time in history, anywhere in the world, that a more-than-human entity has been given equal legal status to human beings under non-customary law. The first time was in 2014 with regard to Te Urewera National Forest, also in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although these rulings constitute a break-through in non-customary law, this status is nothing new to the ancient traditions of many indigenous cultures whose ancestry and identity are synonymous with the more-than-human world, such that there is just the world. It is, of course, somewhat ironic that the highest degree of legal status under Western law is that of human personhood, as it places the entire more-than-human world as secondary, even when exceptions are made. It is also ironic that, in order to have value under Western law, Te Urewera and the Whanganui River must be anthropomorphized. While the legal personification of more-than-human nature is extremely complex, if you travel down the Whanganui River itself, you do not need the law to know its status, a point that is reflected in a whakataukī (Māori proverb): Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au | I am the river, the river is me. Our thanks go to John Perrott for his cultural advice on this matter.