



**Title:** Wild and Windy

**Description:** A view of billowing clouds and blowing sand above Tuhuroa/Farewell Spit. The wind was blowing so hard, I had to weigh my tripod down with rocks and have a friend help hold it steady.

**Photographer:** Ann Wheatley @ann.wheatley.photography

**Where and when:** Tuhuroa/Farewell Spit, Mohua/Golden Bay

**The Story:** The Westland Current in the Tasman Sea sweeps the sand up from the Southern Alps, to form Tuhuroa/Farewell Spit at the tip of Te Waipounamu, the South Island. It is Aotearoa New Zealand's longest sand spit, and also one of the longest in the world, stretching 26 kilometers with another six underwater.

Constant exposure to high prevailing winds buffet and shift the dunes on the northern side. The southern side facing Mohua/Golden Bay is more stable and largely covered with vegetation. Within the protective hook of the spit, the tide recedes as much as seven kilometres, exposing 80 square kilometres of mud flats, creating a rich feeding ground for seabirds, but also a trap for whales, especially long-finned pilot whales. The shallow beach shelves are difficult for whales to detect with their sonar, and the unique shape of the spit makes it difficult for them to find their way out, resulting in all too frequent strandings.

The wetlands of Tuhuroa are an internationally-renowned bird sanctuary, with over 90 bird species recorded. Every spring, thousands of wading birds arrive, including bar-tailed godwits, knots, curlews, whimbrels, and turnstones. Penguins, Australian gannets, Caspian terns, southern black-backed gulls, red-billed gulls and variable oystercatchers also breed in the area.

In November 2019, 20 scientific experts converged for a 48-hour, round-the-clock "bioblitz". They studied selected sites around the base of the spit, and documented incredible species richness, including a diversity of rare plants, freshwater fish, geckos, micro-snails, spiders and insects, as well as the better known seabirds and kekeno/fur seals. They found cave weta, brown gecko (rauwaka), and giant kokopu (*Galaxias argenteus*) fish.

I accompanied insect and fish teams on bioblitz, camera in hand, and celebrated their success with a climb up to this incredible vantage point. As I stood in the howling wind and gazed out on the whole landscape, I felt deep gratitude for Papatūānuku, and experienced a moment of eutierra. In eutierra, the perception of boundaries between self and all else disappears. The thoughts and feelings that create the sense of 'I' and 'other' cease. Eutierra is a secular name for a human experiences described by many religious traditions. The environmental philosopher, Glenn Albrecht created this beautiful word as part of his lexicon of Earth emotions.

<b>Camera:</b>	Olympus OM-D E-M1
<b>Lens:</b>	M.Zuiko 12-50mm F3.5-6.3
<b>Exposure:</b>	50 mm F/9.0 1/200s ISO 200
<b>Digital specs:</b>	4524 x 3394 pixels
<b>Key words:</b>	Tuhuroa, Farewell Spit, Mohua, Golden Bay, Aotearoa, New Zealand, kaitiaki, Manawhenua ki Mohua, HealthPost Nature Trust, Department of Conservation, RAMSAR, wetlands, bioblitz, gecko, galaxids, kokopu, rauwaka, cave weta, godwits, pilot whales, conservation, sustainability, Ann Wheatley, Ecosystems Photography,
<b>Price:</b>	\$250 (incl. GST) for use of the digital image. Visit <a href="http://www.ecosystemsp photography/sales">www.ecosystemsp photography/sales</a> for details & to order, or to get a quote if you would like a high-quality print.
<b>Donation:</b>	The price is made up entirely by a \$250 donation to the HealthPost Nature Trust, or to a sustainability organisation or project of your choice.
<b>Image ref:</b>	AW#002 (please use this reference in all orders and correspondence).

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