



**Title:** "Fishing the Waitaki River mouth"

**Description:** Whitebaiting, Waitaki, North Otago

**Photographer:** Trevor Douglas

**Where, when:** Waitaki River mouth, March 2018.

**Sustainability?** Whitebaiting is a long-standing and important tradition in many families that is fiercely defended by its participants. It requires extraordinary patience, and in a turbulent site like the Waitaki River mouth pictured here, it can be very dangerous. In the right place, the fishing can also be very profitable.

The whitebait themselves are the juvenile stage of native fish. *Inanga* (*Galaxias maculatus*) are the most common native fish species caught as whitebait. Other species include banded kokopu, giant kokopu, kōaro and shortjaw kokopu. These species are all migratory galaxiids. The whitebait are caught as they migrate back upstream to breeding areas after several months of early development in the sea. Many of the whitebait species are considered to be threatened and in decline, mainly because their breeding habitat has been destroyed (eggs are laid in thick stream-side vegetation which has been removed in many farmed catchments).

Fishing a threatened species will always be controversial. Regulations have been strengthened in recent years and compliance is strictly enforced. On the other hand, fishing and gathering of local resources is potentially an excellent incentive to manage the threats of the fishery and restore habitats. Not only would this secure the

whitebaiting practice, it can usher in a whole series of ecosystem benefits and incentivise wise land use and river care over the whole catchment. Fishing is also good for the participants mental health and a very important way that people experience nature.

**Photo notes:** I went to the Waitaki River Mouth with my drone to photograph the contrasts of the fresh water from the Southern Alps mixing with the salt waters of the Pacific Ocean. As the fresh water was clear and clean the contrasts were not visible on this day so I went looking for other subjects.

Looking down from 120 metres the South Bank of the river mouth looked similar to a fish profile and having the shadows of the fishermen scattered around its perimeter, I thought of the companion fish that cling to larger varieties for their food supply.

Exposure 1/320s at 8 mm focal length, f/5 aperture and ISO-100.

**Digital specs:** 4,864 x 3,648 pixels (18 MP).

**Key words:** Waitaki, Waitaki River Mouth, North Otago, Oamaru, Fishing, Whitebaiting, Inanga, habitat destruction, Drone, Abstract, Trevor Douglas, Aotearoa, New Zealand, Sustainability.

**Price:** \$200 (incl. GST) for use of the digital image.

Visit [www.ecosystemsphotography/sales](http://www.ecosystemsphotography/sales) for details & to order, and to get a quote if you want a high-quality print.

**Donation:** The price includes a \$100 donation to a sustainability organisation or project of your choice, or otherwise for *Central South Island Fish & Game Council* <https://fishandgame.org.nz/centralsouthisland/>.

I recommend that the donation goes to *Central South Island Fish & Game Council* to support their work on protecting and enhancing waterways. This is much more than a hunting and shooting organisation – they do an enormous amount of work behind the scenes to advocate for river care and restoration of riparian habitats.

**Image Ref:** TD#003 (Please refer to this reference in orders and correspondence).

**Trevor Douglas, 23 November 2021.**