



Title: “*Kanohi ki te kanohi (B&W)*”

Description: New Zealand sea lion, Tūmai.

Photographer: Henrik Moller

Where, when: Hakapupu (Pleasant River estuary), September 2021

Sustainability? I called this photograph ‘*Kanohi ki kanohi*’, which means head-to-head in Māori, because I got up a bit too close and personal with a sea lion by accident. I was lying on the sand about 4m from the Hakapupu estuary water edge just after dawn, happily photographing Canada Geese further up the estuary. Suddenly a New Zealand sea lion erupted out of the water in my peripheral vision and charged straight at me! They look quite big when you are looking up at them.

The sealion, an adolescent male, stopped about a 1.5 m short of me - I realise now that it was a “bluff charge”, but at that moment I was trying to figure if he wanted to eat me, or to mate me ... and which I would enjoy most! I gingerly got onto shaking legs and quietly backed away far enough to be able to photograph him. This and the following 7 photographs record the encounter over the ensuing 15 minutes.

New Zealand sea lions are known as *whakahao* or *rāpoka* by Māori.

Sea lions are classified by DOC as 'nationally critical' – the same level of threat as Māui dolphins and kakapo. In 2015, the New Zealand sea lion was moved from "vulnerable" to the more serious "endangered" category on the International Union for the

Conservation of Nature's Red List. Conservation agencies use various threat categorisations to prioritise interventions to where it is most important and urgent.

New Zealand sea lions have only recently recolonised the New Zealand mainland. The first pup was discovered at Taieri Mouth, 20 km south of Dunedin in 1993, about 150 years since they last bred on the mainland. The mainland population remains small (less than 300), but is growing with somewhere between 10 and 20 pups born each year.

Photo notes: This is a panorama from 23 exposures for 1/320s, 600 mm focal length, f/6.3, ISO-200. This image is monochrome, but is also available in colour if you would prefer.

Digital specs: 6,565 x 4381 pixels (29 MP).

Key words: New Zealand Sea lion, *Phocarctos hookeri*, marine mammal, species recovery, Henrik Moller, Aotearoa, New Zealand, Sustainability.

Price: \$150 (incl. GST) for use of the digital image.

Visit 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 the *New Zealand Sealion Trust* <https://www.sealiontrust.org.nz/>.

I recommend that the donation goes to the *New Zealand Sealion Trust* because it is a not-for-profit organisation that tracks sealion recovery on the mainland, supports research, and engages in vigorous public education and advocacy for these majestic and misunderstood critters.

Image Ref: HM#007 (Please refer to this reference in orders and correspondence).

Henrik Moller

29 November 2021.