



**Title:** “Lion King”

**Description:** New Zealand sea lion, Tūmai.

**Photographer:** Henrik Moller

**Where, when:** Hakaupū (Pleasant River estuary), September 2021

**Sustainability?** This is an adolescent male, probably around 4 years old. He’s about 90% of full size – the large “Beach master” males can weigh up to 450 kg. They can move surprisingly quickly on land, so stay well back if you can.

The New Zealand sea lion numbers around 12,000 and is one of the world's rarest sea lion species. They are the only species of the genus *Phocarctos*. This is a common pattern amongst New Zealand ‘endemic’ species – that’s lifeforms that are found nowhere else. New Zealand has a high proportion of endemic species and their uniqueness is expressed at a high level in their phylogeny (evolutionary classification

tree) i.e. it's not unusual for the New Zealand species to be the only member of its family, or occasionally even its order of species. These high levels of endemism result from a long period of isolation from the planets main landmasses and the consequent "divergent" evolution of our plants and animals. This is important in two main ways: firstly, our biodiversity is so remarkably different that it is particularly important that it is sustained; secondly, we have sole responsibility to ensure their survival - no one else have populations to safeguard them from extinction; and thirdly, their behaviour and population characteristics make them extremely vulnerable to competition and predation by introduced species and to habitat modification.

It's a thrill to me to see these animals returning to the New Zealand mainland. It can sometimes get depressing to hear about one species after another going down ... for a change, here's a story of hope and gratitude for those working hard to restore their numbers.

**Photo notes:** Exposure 1/320s, 600 mm focal length, f/6.3, ISO-200.

**Digital specs:** 2,668 x 2,801 pixels (7.5 MP).

**Key words:** New Zealand Sea lion, *Phocarcos hookeri*, *whakahao* or *rāpoka*, marine mammal, species recovery, endemism, Henrik Moller, Aotearoa, New Zealand, Sustainability.

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

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**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#009 (Please refer to this reference in orders and correspondence).

**Henrik Moller**  
29 November 2021.