



**Title:** “Te Mata”

**Description:** Te Mata, Havelock North.

**Photographer:** Henrik Moller

**Where, when:** Te Mata, Te Matau-a-Māui (Hawke’s Bay), March 2021.

**Sustainability?** Te Mata Peak is a stunning *maunga* (mountain) rising above the Heretaunga plains, near Havelock North. The peak is used by a huge number of visitors (walkers, cyclists, cars, buses) of all cultures and nationalities. It is also sacred to the local mana whenua (Māori with local rights to the land), in this case the people of Ngāti Kahungunu. When Māori introduce themselves on the marae, they often affiliate to their mountain and river as important roots of their identity.

This photograph shows us a healing scar in land management conflicts in Aotearoa New Zealand. Slightly to the right of centre of the mountain you can make out a zig-zagging track up to the peak. This track was formed in 2017 after the Hastings District Council granted Craggy Peak Winery a non-notifiable consent under the Resource Management Act. Many local Māori and others were outraged and considered the maunga to have been desecrated and their role as kaitiaki (environmental guardians) ignored. To their great credit, Craggy Peak Winery agreed to have the track removed and the land restored, so this photo will look different in 10 years time.

To me this is a story of sadness and frustration. Failure to provide adequate and meaningful opportunities for Māori to exercise kaitiakitanga (guardianship) has been a recurring theme emerging from my research over the past 30 years. At best this is a lost opportunity, at worst a violation of trust and promises between Treaty partners. Finding strong and effective cross-cultural partnerships to look after our shared places is difficult and long overdue.

But this is also a story of hope. The violation was recognised and eventually people and nature will put it right. As an ecologist I used to think the most urgent challenge for the world was ecological restoration – I now think it is biocultural restoration i.e. a paradigm shift where we see the challenge and pathway to repair as being partly ecological, and partly about repairing human relationships. We will succeed if we reconnect with each other as people and communities, as well as with our shared places and ecology.

The controversy over the Te Mata Peak track illustrated many opportunities and lessons. One of the most fascinating ones was a call from the kaitiaki to give the maunga the legal status of a person. This has been instituted for the Whanganui River and the Waikato River. This call is a reflection of a broader “animism” of many indigenous cultures where the biophysical elements of the universe are seen as people and living entities with their own rights and responsibilities. It follows that the way we treat “the environment” would become little different from the way we treat

people. This could be a powerful belief and legal mechanism to accelerate biocultural restoration in Aotearoa.

All that said, the photograph just speaks to me at another level – it was a beautiful sight in the early morning light which made the soft grass seed heads glisten on the eastern faces of the mountain.

**Photo notes:** This is a panorama from 75 images stacked together, each exposed for 1/160s, 70 mm focal length, f/15, ISO-100.

**Digital specs:** 19,500 x 3,150 pixels (61 MP).

**Key words:** Te Mata, mountain, maunga, Heretaunga, Ngāti Kahungunu, Kaitiaki, Kaitiakitanga, environmental guardians, Resource Management Act, consultation, biocultural restoration, 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 *Biodiversity Hawkes Bay* <https://www.biodiversityhb.org/>.

I recommend that the donation goes to *Hawkes Bay Biodiversity* because they are a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates biodiversity restoration by local groups right across the region to set up planting, predator control, river care and education initiatives. They even help local groups prepare grant applications to bring their own vision into fruition.

**Image Ref:** HM#035 (Please refer to this reference in orders and correspondence)