



Title: "Sugar Rush"

Description: Tauhou (Silvereeyes) queuing at a sugar water feeder in winter

Photographer: Henrik Moller

Where, when: Dunedin, March 2021.

Sustainability? These amped up tauhou (silvereeyes, *Zosterops lateralis*) are crowded around our sugar-water bird feeder in our garden in Dunedin. We sometimes have a couple of hundred birds waiting in nearby shrubs and trees, as well as clinging to the perches, the post and each other. We use a pet feeder (normally used for guinea pigs or rabbits) to reduce risk of spreading disease within the bird population – people should avoid feeders where the birds can stand in or poop in the sugar water or food.

The scrum is largest in winter, especially on cold Dunedin mornings. When it's in full swing, the bird party empties that 1-litre water holder in about 20 minutes. Then come spring, they disappear over 3-5 days, dispersing out into the surrounding hills and forests to breed – it's amazingly synchronous behaviour. Part of the pleasure of nature watching is seeing the recurring diurnal, and seasonal patterns. Eventually when you get to know a place, you can spot when something is out of kilter – the odd year when the expected pattern doesn't appear. It's this intimate local knowledge of a place that makes for early warning of change or ecological disturbance. That intimate knowledge helps the local people to decide if and how to intervene to sustain the wildlife. A growing collection of research emphasises the value of "Indigenous and Local Knowledge" when used alongside of or instead of ecological science to guide environmental management.

About 89% of New Zealanders live in towns and cities, so the urban wildlife and especially gardens, urban parks and reserves, even grave yards are the main way that most of us regularly encounter nature. The diversity of garden plants and suppression of rats by domestic cats probably help create the deafening dawn chorus of birds in Dunedin that regularly startles our visitors from cities further

north. Understanding and managing urban ecology has been neglected in our focus on wilderness and national parks, so we don't celebrate enough the amazing life going on near our own doorsteps.

Photo notes: This image combines two focus merged exposures at 1/80s, f/5.6, with my zoom lens at 89mm and ISO-100.

I used a multiple exposure to create a sense of the silvereyes frantic crush for fast food to get through the cold days of winter.

Digital specs: 3,846 x 1,974 pixels (7.6 MP).

Key words: Tauhou, silvereyes, gardens, winter, Traditional & Local Knowledge, 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 Dunedin's "Valley Project" <https://www.northeastvalley.org/>.

I recommend that the donation goes to *the Valley Project* because of their local community approach. They network, connect, educate and assist enterprise – all crucial ingredients for community resilience that underpins adaptation and sustainability transformation.

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