



Title: *“Easy Riders Through the Pig Root”*

Description: Motorbike riders passing through the Pig Root on the way to the Brass Monkey Rally

Photographer: Henrik Moller

Where, when: Pig Root, SH85, June 2021.

Sustainability? Two thousand bikers converged on Oturehua, a small rural town in Central Otago, from all round New Zealand for the 40th and final “Brass Monkey Rally” in May of this year. A similar themed photograph called *“Arrival of the Brass Monkeys”* shows the rally participants arriving at Oturehua later that afternoon.

I share the bikers love for that open and expansive country. This is a photo of the bikers navigating the winding pass through the tussock lands of the Pig Root to reach Oturehua. The road trip is an Easy Rider’s dream.

In the early days of the New Zealand conservation movement, most focus fell on “saving” our forests. This is where the emergency action fell because large-scale clear felling of native forest was underway. Protection of the other habitats, including the native tussock grassland followed, followed mainly steered by Sir Alan Mark. This is a feature of New Zealand’s earlier conservation movement – strong and courageous leaders had the courage and stamina to speak out. All transformations have this feature: as a cynic once put it ... “at first they ignore you, then they attack you personally and call you mad, then they’ll engage, and once the change has happened, then they’ll tell you it was their idea all along”!

These native grasslands are iconic Otago features which support a raft of insects and less conspicuous plants in between the tussocks. The threats to some of the grasslands are removal to ‘improve’ pasture, fire (to stimulate tender growth for the stock to eat), overstocking, and invasive weed threats (especially hieracium and wilding pines).

For me, an ecologist, it’s the tussock grasslands and quiet that enchants, but it’s great to see the town folk coming into the country to experience those iconic landscapes while having fun. Knowing about and experiencing a habitat are important first steps for supporting policy for their sustainable use or preservation in reserves.

Photo notes: I constructed these images by first stitching a panorama of the landscape with an empty road from about 40 images, each exposed for 1/125s, at f/14 and ISO-100. Then I snapped the oncoming bikes at 1/600s, f/11, ISO-500 to cope with their (freaky)

speed. I painted the two sets of images into one image using Affinity Photo software. Keeping the tripod and focal length (100mm) exactly the same throughout the series is key to being able to combine them later.

Is that overkill by a novice photographer, or a way of capturing the grandeur and texture of the landscapes with a medium format camera?

Digital specs: 26,612 x 7,803 pixels (208 MP).

Key words: Motorcycles, rally, road trip, Pig Root, Maniototo, Henrik Moller, Aotearoa, New Zealand, Sustainability.

Price: \$200 (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 *Otago Community Hospice* <https://otagohospice.co.nz/>.

The Otago Motorcycle Club, the organisers of the Brass Monkey Rally, donated proceeds from the event to *Otago Community Hospice*. We warmly *tautoko* (support) that choice of recipient in view of the amazing and loving support that organisation gives to the terminally ill and their grieving families.

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Henrik Moller

4 December 2021