



**Title:** “Tussock haven”

**Description:** Denniston Plateau

**Photographer’s name:** Noelle Bennett

**Where and when:** Denniston Plateau, West Coast, October 2021

**Sustainability:** Because of the number and size of its fauna, the wonderful Denniston Plateau has been described as the land-based equivalent of an offshore island sanctuary. It is seen as a lost world suspended between mountain peaks, sitting largely above the predator tide. Denniston Plateau is made up of coal-bearing sedimentary rocks known as coal-measures. The vegetation found on these coal-measures is incredibly diverse and that diversity creates biological complexity. Botanists suggest that half of New Zealand’s nationally threatened plant species are to be found in small, rare ecosystems such as this, these ecosystems collectively making up less than 0.5% of the country’s total land area. A third of our threatened butterflies and moths are found in these same patches of biodiversity. Denniston is one of only two major coal-mined habitats. As well as being the prime location of a rare species of tall tussock, there are also pockets of other rare tussocks on the plateau as well. The rocks offer crevices for lizards to shelter and plants to find a foothold.

Although predation by introduced mammalian predators is probably reduced in these higher alpine habitats, the whole ecological community is potentially vulnerable to climate change. You can think of mountain tops as islands of cold surrounded by a sea of warmth – and as the climate warms, these island tops may be gradually reduced and eventually even eliminated altogether.

**Photographer’s notes:** Despite, or possibly because of, its history I love this area. It is a place I happily return to over and over again and every visit produces a totally new experience. This is one of a series of four in the Ecosystems Photography portfolio captured from the plateau: “Mount Rochfort paradox”, “Tussock haven”, “Coy” and “Bonsai beauty”.

**Photo specs:** This image is a composite of three images which have each been taken using different exposure levels in order to maximise the dynamic range of the finished photograph. Technical specs: The image was taken using a Panasonic DC-G9 camera and a Panasonic Lumix G-Vario 12-35mm f/2.8 lens. Exposure details - 1/800 sec at f7.1 with an ISO of 200 and a focal length of 24mm (48mm full frame equivalent).

**Digital specs:** 10,000 x 5578 pixels (55.78MP) @ 300dpi

**Key words:** Mount Rochfort, Denniston Plateau, West Coast, Westport, Buller, mine, mining, vegetation, sandstone, outcrops, tussock, climate change, predation, Noelle Bennett, Ecosystems Photography, conservation, sustainability.

**Price:** \$300 (incl. GST) for use of the digital image. Visit [www.ecosystemsphotography/sales](http://www.ecosystemsphotography/sales) for details & to order, or to get a quote if you would like a high-quality print.

**Donation:** The price includes a \$100 donation to a sustainability organisation or project of your choice, or otherwise to the West Coast Branch of the *Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society* <https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/branches/west-coast>.

We recommend that the donation goes to West Coast branch of *Forest & Bird* to support their work on predator trapping, environmental advocacy and education. They have a Kiwi Conservation Club for younger members. Mobilising conservation action on the West Coast is a formidable logistic challenge – the district is 400 km long and there are about 80 members only – they could do with our support.

**Image ref:** NB#032 (please use this reference in all orders and correspondence).

**Noelle Bennett**

5 December 2021